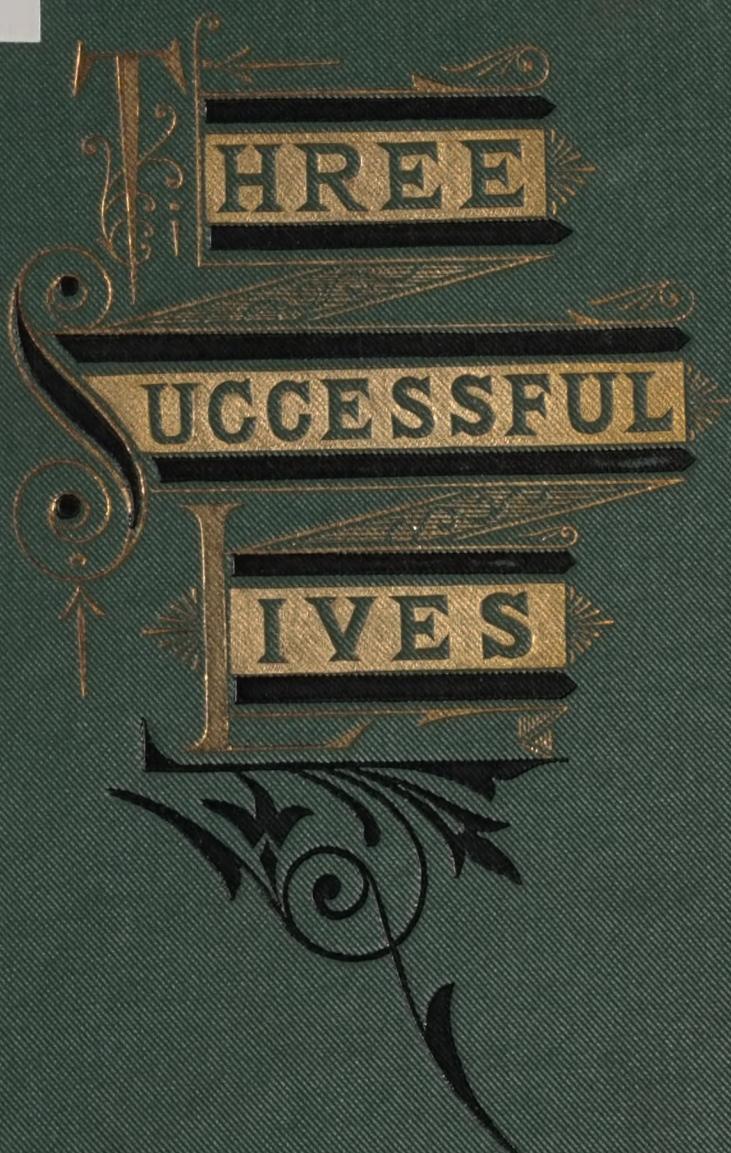


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George and his Father,

See page 9

BEN AND BENTIE SERIES.

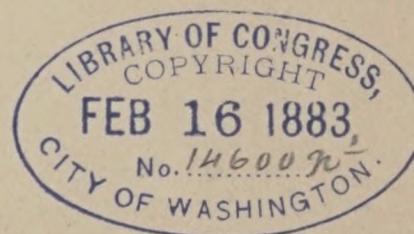
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# THREE SUCCESSFUL LIVES.

By Mary H. Morris.

35  
TWO ILLUSTRATIONS.

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# THREE SUCCESSFUL LIVES.

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## I.

### GEORGE AND HIS FATHER.

**W**HEN George came home from his mother's funeral, despair was in his heart. He returned alone. His father, too feeble in body and too wandering in mind to accompany him, had been left as the only occupant of the silent floor.

The Winthrops, Bentie included, who had left college to pay this last attention to George's mother, the Stantons, and all of the little ones, who shed heart-felt tears as their motherly friend was put into her narrow but restful bed, had returned to their homes directly from the cemetery.

George's grief assumed that silent, forbidding form which, though not congealing sympathy, wards off its expression. His friends,

though pitying him, deemed it unadvisable for the present to offer further consolation.

Something, of course, must be done. He was now in debt to Mr. Winthrop for nearly a year in college. He was penniless. He had an imbecile father, whose only other outlook, should he fail to support him, was the poor-house.

George had an immense amount of pride. The disgrace attached to his father's career rankled in his heart. The concomitants of that father's extreme mental and moral degradation were loathsome to him in the extreme. But he had, at the same time, that feeling in regard to family that led him to consider himself responsible for either the honor or the shame of any one connected with him.

So, though, as he told Mrs. Rutherford, he hated his father, it did not occur to him for a minute, after his first passionate resentment, to rid himself of what he felt to be a discouraging and repulsive incumbrance.

He took the arm-chair opposite the imbecile, who sat in a corresponding one beside the grate, and, placing his feet upon the fender, looked gloomily into the coals, which quivered just as brightly with their ardent

heat as did those from which Bentie had so often read pleasant auguries of life.\*

Although he had been known to his father but two days, he had already acquired an influence over him that promised well to the physician who had been in attendance. Taking George's hand that morning, the doctor had said earnestly, "You have your father's destiny in your hands, my boy."

These words seemed to stand out on the red coals in great, burning letters. He read them over and over till his eyes ached; then glancing furtively at the gigantic man opposite, he beheld him wrapped in a dull, leaden slumber.

"He is nothing more than an animal," muttered George, rising, shaking himself, and going to the window.

All was bright though cold outside. The spring breeze did not whisper, as it had done a week before, of college honors and a brilliant, manly career. It sang no song of a mother in waiting for a successful son; it chanted, in low, despairing tones, of a new-made grave, the wreck of a soul, the ruin of hopes.

George could not stand it. He brushed the

\* See Frontispiece.

angry tears away and turned his eyes again to his father, who sat there like a great, silent mockery of his son's hopes. He had wakened, and, as George approached him, looked up with much love and entreaty in his eyes. Somehow this tall, straight, proud youth, his son, made him feel that there was something of value in his life. He clung to the boy as a drowning man does to a plank. He felt that George alone could save him.

"Come and sit down beside me, my son"—the two latter words spoken with infinite pride.

George recoiled. But, "You have your father's destiny in your hands," seeming again to flash from the coals, he obeyed.

The trembling hand crept over his brown locks, the hollow and fierce eyes grew subdued, the taciturnity dissolved into garrulity, and for an hour or two the father talked in a wandering way of scenes prior to George's recollection, of his own boyhood, indeed.

It was with desperate self-control that George sat still under the touch of a hand that had blighted the only perfect blossom of his life. But he did endure it, and his active mind, half intent on what was said,

and half busied with plans for the support of each, at length decided to ask Mr. Winthrop to intrust him with the school his mother had so successfully managed. "It might be"—George laughed inwardly at the thought which he nevertheless cherished—"that his father would so far recover as to be of some assistance, and thus afford him time for both study and outside effort."

So when Mr. Holmes, having at length grown tired, subsided into silence, George said:

"Father." The word came lingeringly. It was difficult to own in words the being whom Providence had thrown upon his exclusive care.

Mr. Holmes's eyes lighted and he answered eagerly, "What?"

"We—you and I, father—are very poor."

"Yes;" and the father rubbed his hands thoughtfully together and gazed into the fire. "We *are* poor."

"We must do something."

"What shall we do, George?" asked Mr. Holmes, without any apparent thought that he might have a voice in the matter.

George felt discouraged over this perfect

passiveness, but replied—his father looked at him so questioningly :

“We might go on with the school. You would be willing to teach one or two classes, would you not, father?”

“I teach?” There was a momentary flash of the eyes, a momentary proud, hopeful expression, and then, all the light dying out of his face, he answered, “I can’t remember.”

George was in a quandary. “You can go over the lessons for the following day with me at night—over and over if necessary—and by so doing perhaps your memory will return.”

The enthusiasm he succeeded in manifesting had its effect, and Mr. Holmes wanted to begin immediately. So George, although the question of the school was by no means decided, brought out an arithmetic and spelling-book, and, opening them at random, had his father explain this rule and that word.

It went along very well for awhile; then there was a pause, a vacant look, and then his father despairingly said, “The thoughts I want wont come.”

George suggested this and that, went through both questions and answers himself for a few minutes, and then, the half-paralyzed

senses gaining power again, the lesson was successfully continued.

No heart could have remained cold under the desperate attempts the scholar made to meet the expectations of his teacher. George's quick, impulsive nature was deeply stirred, but, at the same time, there remained his bitter grief for his mother, and his sorrow over his altered prospects. The lesson gave him so much hope of his father's final recovery that he started out, just after the twilight had gathered, to make his proposal to Mr. Winthrop.

He soon came out on Fifth Avenue, down which he pursued his walk. How many times he had carried heavily laden baskets of immaculate linen to the basements of some of those stately mansions towering up so brown and high and cold. How many times he had waited by those little iron gates for his mother, and how often had he looked at her tired, pale face, paler in the moonlight as she came out, and longed for the time when he should be a man.

And now that time was drawing near. The tall houses still stood; the iron gates with their cold latches were the same; the broad light still flashed out on the pavement; linen

was washed and carried and paid for as of yore; but his mother's hands, those dear hands, had been since those cold, dark times clothed upon with perfect rest, and, far, far above the stateliest mansion on the wide avenue on which New York's millionaires dwelt, was a mansion not made with hands, where that dear mother dwelt. Bentie's mother was there, too. Suddenly the dark unbelief lurking in his heart asked the questions, "Are they there? Is God merciful? Am I not forever doomed to bitterness and a curse?" These thoughts made God and heaven and the sky, with its countless golden stars, seem so infinitely distant that the little spark of hope quivering in his heart very nearly died out.

He continued his walk like an old man whose time was too short for plans or anticipations. He passed by the hotel, which had had richness in food and apartment and outside respectability for many, and nothing for his father when he had sat friendless in the rain. The clock with its black face was still there. The stages and carriages rattled by, filled with life and beauty. An art-gallery, through whose windows shone out, to the eyes of rich and

poor, Arcadian landscapes and forms of stately women and brave men, attracted his gaze.

There was one picture quite filling the breadth of one of the windows that invited his special attention.

In the background of the painting was a fire-place shaded by a mantel, in whose shadow sat a child. The ashes on the fender, the wood-work around the fire-place, the garments of the child, her hair, her eyes, her complexion, were in a soft gray that suggested Cinderella even before he discovered that such was the title of the painting.

As he gazed at her slender arms, too emaciated for perfect beauty, but exquisite in shape; at her broad, smooth, thoughtful brow; her delicate, pure features, and their expression of subdued longing, he forgot every thing around him, forgot himself, and lived over the old fairy tale as though it were a reality before his very eyes.

He gradually noticed the two magnificent women in the foreground—the step-sisters. Their compact, stately forms, their handsome, rounded throats, their glossy hair and skin so soft that it had a human look, challenged his admiration, but not his heart. The sorrowful,

childish, neglected little figure was the foreground to him, and he looked and longed until he unconsciously stretched out his hands in sympathy.

This act brought him to himself. Could he then feel such real, true sorrow for what was but the representation of a fairy-tale and shut his heart to his father as he had done? And then, thinking further, he knew that he had pitied Cinderella because she seemed to represent all of the bright and beautiful scenes for which he had himself longed. So he was only pitying himself after all! George was too much of a man to do so consciously, and he tried to shake off the feeling by thinking of others who, with all with which he had to contend, had not had his start.

Cinderella had found her palaces, her success; he would, too. Others had begun just as low as he and had succeeded. In the face of all obstacles he would overcome. If his mother were not in heaven, she was *somewhere*—of that he was sure. And for her he would work, for her he would achieve as of old.

He walked now with a quick, resolute step. He passed Delmonico's, with its flower-urns, and the gleam of handsomely set tables

through its broad, low windows. Some day he would take a dinner there if he *chose*; and then, with an odd mixture of the ambitions which surge in every poor, aspiring American boy's breast, and a sense of the manly responsibilities devolving on himself, he ascended the steps of Bentie's home and rang the bell.

The chandeliers were in a blaze. The rich velvet and brocatel, the pictures and the mirl rors, the statuary and the fire, and through the distant doors the gleam from the conservatory, made George, coming from the cold and from his air-castles, feel as though some fairy godmother had brought him hither, if not in a pumpkin-shell, yet by some means quite as unreal.

He did not much resemble the George whose acquaintance we made at the public school. He had shot right up, as boys and girls do sometimes in a year. His athletic exercises at college had straightened the shoulders once quite bent, and his face had gained that indefinable expression which association with the refined and cultured produces. He wore a well-fitting suit of clothes which had cost a whole month of Mrs. Holmes' earnings, and a suit she had sent on to him for his birth-

day, which had occurred just a week before she died.

So George, although he felt that the elegant apartments were greatly beyond his own home surroundings, handsomely dressed, tall, erect, a look of almost solemn but earnest intelligence breathing from his face, appeared just the kind of a caller such a girl as Bentie might have, as she entered the parlor.

She was more than glad to see him. She had felt hurt and repelled by his cold, reserved manner in the morning; but then, after coming home and reviewing with her father that day of long ago when she had been left motherless and all her longings for mother-love and sympathy were destined to rise and rise again and die unanswered, she altogether forgave George, and spent the day in devising a hundred plans, quite as magnificent as her first ones, for his welfare, and then, as her experience suggested that they were impracticable, shattering their airy proportions.

“Papa has not come home yet, George, and I am glad, for I want to see you myself a little, first. I was vexed this morning and yesterday, too, when you would not let me speak to you.”

"What do you mean?" asked George, surprised.

"Why"—and Bentie hesitated, having thought that her first remark would be better understood, and afraid now to continue. But George insisted on knowing. "You treated us all as if we were enemies."

"O!" And George, looking quite relieved, and then half-smiling, gently replied: "It was not that, Bentie. I still have the same feeling that prompted me to act thus."

George, considering his pride, was speaking very plainly. "It was this," he continued, brushing back the hair from his expressive brow: "you had all been so faithful in trying to lift my mother and myself above the sphere in which you found us, and *we* were trying to do what we could, and then this curse came upon us to disappoint you and discourage me."

"George! George!" Bentie expostulated, "we never tried to lift you above your sphere; we simply broke down the barriers that shut you in a too-narrow circle. And O, do you suppose that for a minute we could ask a higher success for our plans than has come to pass? One of you has gone home by a road

of faithful duty and self-denial we any of us might wish to travel could we have the grace to go so humbly and uncomplainingly. God himself brought your father back to you that you might, for the first of all the works we believe you are to do, bring him to a saving knowledge of honor. We have been assured through your success in college that we did not mistake your ability. Why, George, while considering all of these providences through the day, I have been led to say, over and over, ‘I will’ always ‘lift up mine eyes unto the “Lord,” from whence cometh my help.’ I should think all of these things would make you cling very closely to God; they do me.”

“How do you know that they are from the Lord?” replied George in a tone of bitterness.

“How do I know?” Bentie paused, and then her face brightening radiantly, she replied with full assurance, “Why, George, I know it.”

There was that in her tone and her look and his knowledge of her pure, conscientious life, that made George feel reverential for a moment:

“There must be something in it,” he said

to himself. "Bentie and Ben, and a score of practical Christians with whom I am acquainted, would not make these assertions out of vanity or from imaginary comfort;" and then, more than all, Bentie, he knew, believed, as his mother had done, through her heart, through love.

"I believe you are right, Bentie. I want to think you are," and then pausing, and with a great effort, he said: "I feel so horribly tempted, sometimes, when I do not believe any thing, that I hope you will never, never lose your faith in God, who, I know, exists, but who I cannot altogether believe is merciful and pays attention to our small concerns. I wish—" and George looked as if he half believed himself a simpleton.

"What?" asked Bentie, as he paused.

"I wish you would pray for me."

"Really, George?" and her eyes lighted with pleasure and hope. She looked so surprised and yet so delighted, that, feeling he had made a novel request, he laughed, but replied quite earnestly,

"Yes."

"Then, George," said Bentie emphatically, "you are going to be converted."

"Don't be too sure." And George smiled over her resolute manner.

"I have never prayed for any body's conversion yet in vain, and I am exceedingly anxious for yours."

"O!" And beginning to feel uncomfortable under the impression her manner conveyed to him, namely, that he was now obliged to be converted, he rejoined:

"I'm a stubborn case; I will wear your patience out."

"But not my prayers, George. You do not know how much God and the manner in which he works fill my mind. I'm a Methodist, of course, a real free-grace one, and yet—" Bentie hesitated, at a loss to explain herself, and George, growing deeply interested in the fair expositor, sat down to listen. "I know that Christ has answered ever and ever so many of my prayers for the smallest things, and a great many for large blessings. Now some of these, of course, have been things that other people did not want at the time, conversions you know, and such things. So while it was free grace for me, it was a kind of predestination for them, you see. Now, in this kind of predestination I am a very blue Presbyte-

rian. I'm just as sure as sure can be that, if I pray with sufficient earnestness and live sufficiently near to God, my prayers will be answered. I want you to be converted more than any body I know. You are talented, George. God is king right here on earth. I feel that he will use your talents to your own prosperity and his glory, if you give up every thing to him. You can amount to a great deal more if you are a Christian than if you are not."

Mr. Winthrop coming in at this juncture, the conversation was changed.

But George had received a message that he could not forget, and that message was to go with him until he deciphered its mysteries into tidings of great joy.

"Well, George," said Mr. Winthrop, with extended hand, advanced to meet his young friend, "I am glad to see you. You are my boy, you know."

George flushed slightly and then, looking up into the strong, smiling face beside him, said, with boyish earnestness, "I wish I were, Mr. Winthrop."

"That is not right. There is the material in your father, my boy"—and Mr. Winthrop

placed his hands on George's shoulders—"to make such a man as I could never be. For every ambitious thirst for fame and knowledge, for your ready talent in debate, you are to thank that father whom you have cursed in your heart. Because he has given you the gift of talent, bless him in his humiliation, love him with the love of a son, and, when the hour comes, as I am sure it will, when you shall receive honor and renown, so guide and assist your father, that at that glad time his virtuous gray locks will be your highest praise. 'Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.'"

"O, Mr. Winthrop, there was no trouble about mother!" and George, overcome with emotion, broke down.

"The command is honor, whether that honor comes spontaneously or not."

"I'll work for father; I'm too proud to do otherwise; and I'll own him. But the love—" and George looked with a wicked gleam in his eyes—"it is hate."

Mr. Winthrop was touched by the suffering the lad was undergoing; but he understood human nature well enough to know that George

would lose more than he would gain by shutting out sympathy for the erring.

"My boy, if you work uncomplainingly and unceasingly for your father, and if you own him unreservedly, that is, honor him in your conduct toward him and in all you say of him, you will redeem him. His redemption through you will awaken such a love in your heart as you would never otherwise have had."

George was trembling from suppressed excitement. He said, finally, but as if the decision had cost him a desperate effort, "I'll try to do as you say. But it *will be trying* for awhile."

"That is right, George. The question to be settled now is, How are your father and you to be supported?"

"I have considered that matter." And George related the school project and his father's attempt to learn.

Bentie's eyes filled with tears to overflowing, and Mr. Winthrop, full of sympathy for the ambitious boy, gave not only his consent but the warmest encouragement.

"But," he asked, "when are you to finish your college course?"

"O!" And George's determination having

risen as he had proceeded, he replied, "I'll be like that Methodist preacher who, when asked where he graduated, said, 'On horseback from the itinerary.' I shall have a graduation, but not from Middletown."

"I am willing, George, to provide for your father and advance the money for your college career if you feel like accepting."

"Never!" And George's eyes flashed. "I took the other debt, but it weighed on me like a nightmare; and I felt as certain as one can of any thing in this life that I could pay it off. But you see how things have turned. I think if Bentie had any free-grace or predestination views on this subject, she would say that I was predestined to pay as I go, instead of blocking out my days of settling as I choose."

Mr. Winthrop looked at Bentie inquiringly, who, smiling, replied:

"We had a short doctrinal talk on other matters before you came in—that was all."

Her father, who had really hoped that George would answer as he had done, replied:

"You are right; and, although I think that the Lord is trying you severely, yet he will bless you accordingly, if you keep up your courage. I really think that your duty is to

stay by your father and complete the work which I believe your mother successfully began. And it is different working for two than for one. The speculation might be called a risky one if you continued it."

"It has been as it is. I may be a long time in paying the debt I already owe you, but it shall be squared, interest and all, if I live."

"And if you should not," replied Mr. Winthrop, laughingly, "I will have a sheriff's sale of your household goods."

He made George laugh heartily before settling down to an earnest talk with him in regard to the management of the school.

When the clock striking eight reminded the boy of his father left alone, he rose, saying: "Then to-morrow morning I will go out and bring the scholars back and begin in earnest. I am strong, and I think I can snatch time for study after father is in bed."

"Good-bye," said Bentie, holding out both hands, and shaking George's trembling, excited ones, warmly. "Good-bye, George; though I shall be back at college and busy with my studies, I shall pray daily for you until you are converted. Our talk was about that," she explained, turning to her father.

George went out from the elegant but home-like mansion, and again walked past the houses which, earlier in the evening, had loomed so cold and forbidding before his eyes. He thought now that there was fire behind the brown stone, and suffering and loving hearts there, and hopes and disappointments, and—well, all of that motley building of air-castles and putting aside of cloud-capped dreams that every human heart born into this changing world understands sooner or later only too well.

Two days later the boys and girls were in their accustomed place.

Job, who had quietly bidden George good-bye and left his room at Mrs. Holmes', lest George might not want him, was reinstated. The little fellow, after finding a bed as best he could in cheap lodging-houses when nights were stormy, and under sheds and upturned carts when the weather was fair, dropped into his accustomed place with such a thankful heart as only homeless boys and girls have for mere food and shelter. Job had found a warm friend in George, who had put the child's angular and blunt letter away among a few other mementos of his mother.

It was a warm and sunny April morning on which the school gathered together once more. There were two chairs instead of one in Mrs. Holmes' accustomed place. Order had been called, and George was about to assign lessons, when he felt a hand on his arm. He looked up to meet his father's eyes. "Your mother began the day with prayer."

The cover of the book George held open fell from his grasp. "Had Bentie prayed for him? Was his mother in the room to influence? Was God whispering?" The boy was surprised and impressed, and after a minute's silence, said: "Children, we will pray."

Silently every little head was bent. "The Lord's Prayer," the father whispered, as his son paused.

In broken tones, while thinking of the prayer as he had never done before, he began, "Our Father." Softly, reverently, beseechingly, the gaunt man at his side joined in. "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

As the little school opened so it continued: prayer every morning, two chairs every morning, in which father and son sat. There were days of weakness for the father and ever-growing strength for the son. There were

days when mind seemed to fail from the one and an intellectual improvement for the other seemed set aside. But as time went on there were fewer and fewer of these drawbacks. When the June vacation came the kingly intellect had seated itself firmly on its throne, the hands once so weak had found strength to sign a pledge against strong drink, and had presented that same pledge to every boy and girl in the school.

George, although he had not paid a cent on his debt, had not failed to make both ends of their current expenses meet. In the coming autumn, if his father were even as strong then as now, he foresaw an opportunity for long evenings for student work. Thus, through disappointment, his chastened grief, his moral strength, and the love slowly growing for his father, hope returned and his ambition mounted up as on eagles' wings.

## II.

## BEN'S GRADUATION.

WE must now pass over quite an interval of time. It is two years from the date of the close of the last chapter. June is here, with its balmy air and gentle skies and sweet flowers. Bentie has just passed her examinations for Junior, and Ben wanders about the pleasant town, which will be forever dear to him as the scene of his college days, with a great feeling of impatience, and much pride, which the home letters and the letters from Bentie and from George serve to strengthen.

The faculty of the college had individually shaken hands with Ben and congratulated him on the fact of being elected valedictorian of his class. The Freshmen looked upon him with that awe so dear to a Senior's heart. The Sophomores, in trying to ape his culture, wisdom, and popularity, showed their appreciation of the person Ben named *me*. The Juniors, though seldom in words admitting any

virtue outside of their class, were, nevertheless, delighted when Ben placed himself on a familiar footing with them. Every member of his own class which, after studying college Talmuds, had decided themselves to be by all odds the most brilliant, original, elegant, and inspiring class that had ever been passed, and contemplated graduation, voted in words and acts that their valedictorian was a regular "brick." Seniors in senior vacation will employ slang.

In the inner side of his vest, next his heart, Ben wore a half-dozen thicknesses of paper covered with hieroglyphics, which he knew, however, meant his valedictory, and which his bosom friends to whom he had deciphered them declared eloquent. So, being all in readiness for the crowning day of a collegiate's life, he gave himself up, like a young athlete as he was, to excursions on the river, to long strolls, and to daily practice for a boat-race to come off in July.

Now I suppose you would like to know just how Ben looks and what kind of a young man we are about to launch upon the world.

Well, dear boys and girls, just remember that the person telling you this story does not

believe in genius, never having met any one who could not be just what he or she is through sheer work; neither does Ben's biographer believe in perfect beauty, never having seen an Apollo Belvedere outside of an art-gallery.

To begin: Ben is now what may be termed a very promising young man. He is out of his teens. He is twenty-one. He is six feet high and is broad accordingly. His brown eyes do not wear quite so solemn an expression as they did five years ago. His firm, honest, intelligent mouth will be accepted by you all as properly advanced, since on each side of its bow curls a thick brown mustache, of which Ben is never for a moment unconscious. It is his first care in the morning and his last thought at night. He is as fond of bugs and frogs as he was when, a reserved boy, he first met Bentie at Camp Tabor. The only difference between the Ben of then and now is that the present one is at no loss for subjects other than scientific on which to occasionally discourse to young ladies.

In short, Ben finds girls agreeable, whether they can talk on his side of the question or not, provided they can talk—something.

As to his scholarship, Ben has had tuggings and disappointments since George left; but steadily, unfailingly, he has led his class because he has worked to do so. It was the hope he cherished when he entered college, and he has done all he could to realize that hope. Diligent, faithful study has crowned his efforts with victory.

Every body who speaks of him calls him "a fine fellow," "a capable young man," "a youth of decided ability;" but I never heard any one, not even a Sophomore, call him a genius. Are not some of you comforted?

Several clergymen have asked him to enter the ministry; but he has, after examining himself, felt sure that he had no call and has saved that loftiest of all professions from a clog. Almost all of his learned friends have asked him what profession he intended to follow, and, to the surprise of some, he has answered, "I intend to learn a trade."

"Why, Mr. Stanton," said a young lady, shocked on receiving this piece of information, "I am surprised. Leave the trades for those who cannot aspire to any thing higher."

"Miss Finickety," said Ben, with great decision, "trades in America are professions. I

intend to be a practico-scientific iron manufacturer."

"O—a prac—on a large scale then?"

Ben's eyes twinkled as he added, with much earnestness, "I am going to work by the day—hammer, puddle, and so forth, with my sleeves rolled up."

"O!" and Miss Finickety averted her eyes and held up both hands in dismay. "You will be so soiled looking, so black, so grimy. It cannot be true, Mr. Stanton."

But Ben declared that it was, and concluded: "Did you ever know of any thing beautiful and noble in this world that did not have a beginning in dust, or toil, or homeliness? Flowers, my dear Miss Finickety, precious stones, the food we eat, the fire we burn, have had a burial in the earth. They could not rise did they not. So," he added, "I am going to be planted near an iron-mine until I am sprouted into an iron manufacturer."

"You dreadful man!" and Miss Finickety, who was as pretty a girl as one ordinarily meets, looked quite bewildered.

Ben glanced up at the ceiling, then out on the lawn and around Miss Finickety's handsome parlor, and his eyes softened and his

mouth had that expression which the most rollicking boys and men can assume when their admiration is awakened by genuine girls or brave women. His thoughts, however, were far above Miss Finickety, as he said :

“ Why, I know a young lady—accomplished —she plays the piano and makes it say, too, something besides ‘ Tiddle de dum, tiddle de dee ; ’ she speaks French, and once in a great while sings Italian songs—she prefers English ones, however ; she has studied mathematical astronomy and translated Latin poetry into English verse ; and she can cook and keep house—and she told me that I was a brave, noble man because I was going to learn a trade. Now, what do you think of all that ? ” And Ben looked down on his listener with great gravity.

“ O, you have been off on an adventure somewhere and made believe that you were an ignoramus, and the young lady has wanted to encourage you. College boys are never to be trusted.”

“ No, she can read me like a book—at least she says so. She has read what I am to deliver on that awful day, and approves it ; and, by the way, I am expecting her on the next

boat, and it is time it was here," looking at his watch. "Excuse my haste," Ben exclaimed, making a sudden exit into the hall and on to the piazza. He looked back to behold Miss Finickety transfixed with astonishment and disappointment over the fact that the valedictorian could part with her society with so little reluctance.

The steamer was just in sight as Ben reached the wharf. How blue the June sky was! how glittering the water! how happy every body looked! What if Bentie were not on board?

On the steamer came, growing larger and larger as her majestic proportions drew near. Her decks, laden with passengers, were white with fluttering handkerchiefs.

Some one was leaning over the railing and shaking a square of cambric vehemently. O, that is Trot—or Rose, as we should say, since she has learned to dislike her baby name. She had the old manner, and the same flashing eyes, now wild with excitement lest Ben should not see her first. Behind her were his father and mother, Mr. Winthrop and Mrs. Rutherford. Where was Bentie? Ben's heart sank as he tried, what would have seemed a hope-

less task, to discover a familiar face among hundreds close together. But he did find it.

Off in the only empty spot on all the deck, with her face somewhat turned from the shore, stood Bentie, listening to something very interesting that George was saying.

Ben felt as if every thought and every look should have been concentrated on himself at this august epoch in his life. While he was nursing this opinion Bentie turned her head, discovered that they were at their journey's end, and, leaning over the rail, her bright eyes beaming and her whole face wreathed in smiles, waved her hat to Ben, as she could not, in her eagerness, find her handkerchief.

Ben forgot every thing then but that she saw him, and he was at hand at the gangway to help them all off and stow them into the carriages in waiting in such a way that George and Bentie and himself, much to Rose's dismay, were the only occupants of the smaller one. Thus they drove through the long, wide, elm-shaded streets to the hotel, where they met again to ask a hundred questions and laugh over a hundred jokes.

“ We have refurnished the library, taken up the old carpet, the drugget, and so forth, and

filled the walls with handsome cases. The old books look quite new."

"Pshaw!" Ben drew a wry face, and then, glancing at Bentie, said, "You can see mother thinks there are no more boys around. Mother, darling, have you handcuffs and ankle-bands in the new library to fasten me in such a way that I will not get myself or any thing out of order?"

Mrs. Stanton looked disappointed, and Trot thoroughly disgusted, as she said, "Why, Ben, every thing in the room is in perfect harmony. There isn't a scratch to be seen. I think the library is even handsomer than Bentie's."

"I dare say it is beautiful;" and Ben, putting his arms around his mother's neck and bringing his eyes down to hers, she saw how moist the brown orbs were, and then understood it all. "You see, mother, I feel as though the boy part of me were slipping away with the spots and scars and faded furniture of the library."

"Your room is not changed, Ben."

"O well, then it is all right." All this was said so rapidly that no one else heard it.

The hotels were full of the friends of the collegiates, and the town was gay, to Bentie's delight and Trot's ecstasy.

Although Bentie was nearly twenty years old and Trot but twelve it was the latter who felt the deepest anxiety about immaculate boots, perfectly fitting gloves, and "just the right shade for my complexion." Still Trot's wardrobe was a sensible one, every garment being girlish and simple; and she had a clean, neat look, which was wanting in some of the misses, who were so ruffled that they looked like four-decked steam-boats in western rivers. Her blonde hair, heavy, shining, and fine, tied back with blue ribbons, was the only gold she wore. As of old, and in spite of herself, she was Ben's shadow, until he be-thought him of a docile Freshman whom his sister would enjoy training. After this arrangement was made there was peace in the camp during the remainder of their stay.

But if Trot were disposed of it was otherwise with George. He had neither eyes nor ears for any other of the numerous young ladies but Bentie, and as Bentie herself seemed just as glad to be with George as with him, Ben accepted matters gracefully, and really admired Bentie all the more. So they were an inseparable trio.

What were George's feelings, his thoughts,

as he walked beneath the shading elms and looked from his old window, and met the honor men, and heard the criticisms of the faculty on this one or that. How did George's compare with the fifty minds that were to stand up before the world before taking a formal farewell of regular discipline?

Well, the two years, over which we have in a half hour glided, had not been fruitless, so far as appearance went. He looked more a man than did Ben. As tall, as broad, as erect as his friend, there was that in the lines about his cheeks which told of a long struggle and a victory. There was that about the large, firm, straight mouth which betokened an indomitable will. Out from the deep eyes shone a steady, intelligent, concentrated light, that was all that had even been needed to govern his little school. It was light that won him respect, confidence, and attention wherever he went. All through the two years of drudgery never a week had passed without seeing him either at Mrs. Stanton's or Mrs. Rutherford's.

For the boys reading what I write I will say that there is nothing that so refines a boy as the companionship and influence of mature and elegant women. In this respect George,

the past two years, had made up in his social training what had been wanting when he and Ben were little boys together in the grammar school.

Night after night had seen him going to the Cooper Institute to attend the lectures which have been a blessing to so many struggling young men. Many a midnight hour had seen him in his mother's arm-chair, the current papers and periodicals at his side, his strong and active mind studying and passing comments on all of interest occurring in the busy, active world.

He could by no means have passed some of the examinations in which Ben had, a month ago, shone so brilliantly; but, in all questions of State and finance, in all rules on oratory and literature, he could have taken his second degree. And he knew that with time and opportunity the rest would come.

While studying, working, and achieving the redemption of his father, he had paid his debt to Mr. Stanton and saved enough money to buy himself a handsome suit and defray his expenses incident to commencement week.

Ben, though he was valedictorian, felt and

knew that his old friend, if not in some things, yet in others, stood beside him.

All the members of the class wanted George for an escort for some of their fair friends. George had always been in many senses a boy of one idea. It was Ben and Bentie who had seen years ago beneath the patches and the poverty. It was Ben and Bentie who had been in one way and another his pole-stars. Here he was with a whole week on his hands and that week's happiness depended, to him, on being near the two whose friendship had never for an instant waned. So, though he received the introductions, and said what must be said before two persons know a single thing about each other, he seldom went further, and generally, in half an hour's time, gravitated to his post by Ben or Bentie.

Now I suppose that some of you think he must have been a bore. He would have been, perhaps, if he had not, with his growth, developed such a fund of dry humor that those who knew him well were always glad to make him welcome.

Commencement day came, fair, pleasant, with a balmy breeze blowing up from the river, and odorous with a hundred floral offerings,

The church was crowded long before the time. Up in the gallery, where Ben had placed them so that he would be sure to see them, sat his friends. Bentie and George and Trot and his mother were all in a row, and behind them the rest of those who felt an honest pride in "their boy."

How sweet Bentie looked in her modest gray dress and drooping hat, with its soft gray and white feathers. She wore nothing to heighten the effect of the gray with her fresh young face but a beautiful coral necklace resting around the dainty ruffle at her throat and upon the silk of her white tie. Yes, there was more color about her; she held in her lap a bouquet of flowers which she herself had arranged and which looked like the fit offering from one so artless and so lovable.

George and Trot had flowers in their laps also. In fact, the whole party, arranged as they were, were not unlike a flower pyramid.

Trot leaned over to Bentie and whispered: "I think Ben will get as many flowers as any body else. I hope he will have the most;" surveying, meanwhile, as many flowers as were in sight.

"That would not make them any the sweeter

to Ben, I hope," and Bentie looked a little reproachfully into Trot's eyes.

"Well, he is valedictorian!"

"O!" and Bentie smiled. "Perhaps that should make a difference."

At length the music began.

Into the packed audience-room filed the fifty Seniors, and, with the gravity which became Seniors, took their seats. On the rostrum the trustees, the faculty, and the "influential friends" of the college arranged themselves.

The music ceased. Prayer was offered. A salutatory was announced.

A tall young man, with much gravity and a look upon his face as if he were going to try his skill in some other than his mother tongue, advanced. Trot, at this solemn moment, giggled.

Bentie stepped on the small boot, (which, I am sorry to say, Trot insisted on having a tight fit, to appear before her brother's friends,) and Trot, to Bentie's dismay, uttered a short, stifled "O!"

The salutatorian heard it while "revolving," as Virgil says, his first Latin sentence in his mind, and, glancing imploringly at the gallery, he bowed—whether to Trot or to the President

of the college will remain forever uncertain—and began.

Of course every body, even the children, looked exceedingly knowing while the classical young man opened his hands and extended his arms at four various times: first to the faculty, then to the trustees, then to the “friends,” then to his class. He drew alarmingly near to the edge of the rostrum, and Ben, notwithstanding the task soon to be devolved upon himself, was seized with a great longing to laugh over the picture he made of the Latin orator suddenly losing his footing and plunging headfirst into the midst of his class. But at last the final sentence with its high sounding vowels was pronounced, and the first speaker, amid vociferous applause, took his seat.

Every thing that was said by every one was, of course, received with unqualified approval. The learned poem by the class poet was applauded until the class really thought that it had given birth to a genius.

At last, at last, Ben ascended the rostrum. Trot grasped her flowers with both hands. George's mouth contracted for an instant, and his heart gave a great aching throb. He

longed to stand at that moment where his friend stood. Then, a trifle paler, his face relaxed, and, with all the fondness of a brother, he bent forward to watch Ben. Bentie thought for a moment of the examination in the grammar-school five years before. Then her thoughts leaped over the two remaining years of her college life to her graduation, and then, like a bird, as she sometimes seemed, smoothing down her gray plumage, she felt a great admiration and respect for "Ben."

And Mr. and Mrs. Stanton! Well, whether you are in college or in school, or whether you know very little of either place, let me tell you that there is nothing more inspiring and at the same time saddening to a parent than the day when a son or a daughter steps before a host of watchful eyes, across that stream which divides boy and girl life from the responsibilities of manhood and womanhood.

Here was Ben, their son, who, through twenty-one years of life, had never, in word or act, disgraced them, standing before the world with the highest college honor to grace his career.

Hereafter it would not entirely be they who would plan his life and fulfill his destiny. As

they behold him erect, slightly flushed, and full of suppressed emotion, they looked back upon his childhood and his boyhood, as we gaze at the lingering twilight of a day whose sun some time ago sank to rest in the far West. Tears of pride and of loving duty fulfilled and of strong hope for his future dimmed their eyes as, with trembling voice, he sketched the history of the class and pointed to those heights of thought and act to which each one was to aspire. Then pausing, his broad chest heaving, his clear eyes uplifted, he pointed upward while, through the open windows rustled, like angels' wings, the soft murmur of the summer breezes. With Christian earnestness and with the inspiration of a living faith he bade his classmates scale those heights of spiritual experience found in a sacred nearness to the embodiment of all good—Jesus Christ.

George covered his eyes at this juncture. Ben was inconceivably ahead of him when he could feel and talk thus. Outwardly, the two lives were faultless. Inwardly, Ben's victories were what they were because he had learned to say "Abba, Father;" George's, because pride and energy and intellect had been his monitors.

"Ah," George thought at that moment, "if I but realized the inspiring comfort I see shining in Ben's face; if I but knew that Christ lived for me, how life would be glorified!" He wept underneath the shadow of his hands.

Bentie, guessing what was passing in his mind, renewed her prayer for his conversion, never doubting that it would be answered in the Lord's good time.

When Ben concluded there was no clapping. It did not occur to anyone to stir or exclaim. The silence, though, was a most eloquent tribute. After this expressive pause followed the floral shower. Trot threw her huge bouquet with great force. It came down squarely on her brother's head as he was making his most graceful bow to the host before him. And then there was a revulsion. Then the applause came.

Ben, with ready ingenuity, looking up at Rose's mischievous face, offered her such a suggestive thank you, that every body ceased looking *collegefied*. The trustees' faces shone as those of boys do when they have perpetrated a joke.

Thus Trot's bouquet afforded Ben and his classmates an opportunity of forgetting them-

selves as the center of attraction. Their faces were much shorter when they filed out of the church than when they filed in, and the congratulations they received when they were outside were of the merriest nature.

Rose, panting and blushing to great advantage, took Ben's hand in hers and said: "You need not feel so important. Valedictorians are never heard of again after they graduate."

"Eh? Didn't you hear from me?" Ben took the small face between his hands and made the blue eyes look straight into his.

"O, I'll say y-e-s if you will on-ly let me g-o!" she gasped at length, quite provoked that her brother had the better of her.

"I am sure that we shall hear more of Ben," said George, warmly. "He was not made valedictorian because he was a bookworm and nothing else."

"No, indeed," echoed Bentie; "Ben is too round to ever fit into a corner."

"Do you think so?" And Ben looked eagerly into her admiring face.

"O I am sure of it, since you are sensible enough to learn a trade."

"Poor Miss Finickety!" was Ben's rather strange reply. "I wish that she had not given

me, a day laborer, those flowers, and in such a grand basket. I am afraid I shall soil them."

Bentie told him to stop such unkind remarks, and then, altogether forgetful for the time of George's quiet presence, she left the church on Ben's arm. They talked quite like two old people about the foundry into which he, after a month's respite from thought or toil of any kind, was to enter.

"I have always been told, Bentie, that my air-castles would dissolve in mist and fall in rain to the earth. But I declare they have so far proved too substantial for any such liquid state."

"I hope, Ben, that you will always build them. People who never see any thing but the earth on the earth, and the sky in the sky, are stupid, and I don't believe they accomplish half as much as they might if they would once in awhile employ more than their two eyes."

Ben quite agreed with her, and then, Trot and her Freshman appearing, the talk became too general to make it worth my while to chronicle what was said.

## III.

## BEN AS A MANUFACTURER.

**A**MONG the New Jersey hills, down in a deep hollow through which struggles a winding, impetuous stream, are extensive iron-works. This gorge is shaped like a letter V. At its apex is an irregular and picturesque mass of rocks over which falls the river, rising in spring and autumn to such dimensions that the surging waters, in their precipitous descent, echo and dash until the houses on the overlooking hills tremble and the windows rattle in their casements.

The banks of the river, naturally steep and high, are made still more so by huge masses of cinder which have been emptied over them from time to time until the land immediately lining the stream is seamed and scarred and rough, as though some volcano had discharged a leaden and glazed mass along the gorge.

Above the banks, on the left-hand side, tower hills whose soil, through the numerous springs

with which it is penetrated, is moss-covered. They are shaded by a dense growth of hemlock and chestnut. A broad and winding path curves along the side of these hills as far as the apex of the V, and beyond this enlarges into a wood-road, following at a short distance from its border a broad pond into which the river has been widened; it finally disappears in a deep woods on a valley bottom into which the hills, turning a blunt angle, one by one emerge.

Far above this river path, up so high that the eye overlooks an extended valley country and mountains beyond, is a group of residences, into one of which you must come with me.

The magazines and papers you see are much the same as those in the Stanton home in the city. The furniture looks as if it were made for use and comfort. The broad windows, thrown wide open, look down on the river, two blast furnaces, a score of tall mill chimneys, and a romantic town straggling up the hills on the farther side of the stream.

The Stantons, you will doubtless say, are changing people. That is true.

But the time having come for Ben to begin

life in earnest, it seemed well to his father to settle him in a home during these first years out of college, instead of having him tossed about in friendless boarding-houses and exposed to all of the temptations of homeless men.

So they have all come up to spend the summer and early autumn with him. Cold weather will call them back to the city with Rose, whose ambition in study is not second to Ben's. They are within pleasant driving distance of "Camp Tabor," whither they propose going during the camp-meetings, to spend their evenings.

After much persuasion on the part of the Stantons, the Rutherfords and Winthrops consented also to spend their summer at "The Heights." They are all ensconced there, Bentie with a room so high that every morning she wakens to behold the sun rising over the distant blue of the hills. Rose is Bentie's room-mate, and, although eight years younger, reads the same books, has many of the same aspirations, and in the midst of all her womanly ways is occasionally so childish that Bentie cannot refrain from laughing at her expense.

One morning, shortly after their arrival, they

were full of anticipations of an excursion they were to take through the mills.

Among Rose's dresses was a light cambric, which, inadvertently, had been made too long, but which she had persisted in keeping as it was, because of the important feelings to which it gave rise.

Bentie, dressed in a dark brown linen with not even a ribbon to be soiled by the dust and cinders, watched Rose as she glanced along the hooks in the closet, and then laid her hand on the admired garment. An amused smile crept over her face, and Rose, turning suddenly, caught it.

"Now, Bentie, I think you are real mean. You have all done nothing but laugh over this dress, and I am going to wear it all summer, to tease you; see if I don't." And the blue eyes snapped.

Bentie looked with an abstracted gaze out of the window, as though it did not matter in the least to her, while Rose, taking the dress down, tipped the mirror at the right angle, in order to see the skirt fall till it almost touched the floor as she donned the garment. Nevertheless, she always felt better if she had Bentie's approval.

Pausing suddenly and drawing a long breath : “Isn’t it a misfortune, Bentie, that I am so tall?”

“Why, Trottie?”

“O, do call me Rose. One would think I could not walk.” And the pink swept in waves up her transparent cheeks and her eyes filled with tears.

“Why, Rose?”

Trot jerked her dress together, and, taking a second survey, said : “Well, because it is positively necessary, if I am to look decent, that I should dress as if I were eighteen.”

Bentie looked at the small, childish face crowning all this height, and smiled again, quite to Rose’s vexation, who wanted Bentie to say that no one would take her to be less than eighteen.

But Bentie said, instead :

“You always seem just like a little girl to me, and your face, Rose, is so childish, that any one can see you are nothing but a little girl.”

“Bentie!” and, with an end of her tie in each hand, Trot turned from the window ; “it is very evident that you have a spite against this dress. Now you can’t get me to take it

off." And with many needless spasms, Rose finished her toilet.

She walked into the breakfast room with so much majesty and "height," as Ben said, whenever the dress made its appearance, that her father knew a storm was brewing.

"Well, daughter, you must eat a hearty breakfast this morning. Will you have some steak?" And Mr. Stanton passed her a generous plate of steak and potato.

"About a quarter of that, please, papa." And Trot sat bolt upright.

"Why, little girl, are you ill?"

Now this was too much.

"Papa, one would think it a cardinal sin for me to grow up, the way you all talk. I'm sure I can't help the way God made me."

"Father, don't you see that Trottie has donned her tall cambric, and is Miss Stanton this morning?" Ben's eyes twinkled across the table to Bentie,

Trot gave Ben what she designated a look, and then hastily took a sip of coffee.

"Let Rose rest," said Aunt Winifred. "I think it is the hardest thing in the world for a child to grow up,"

This only made matters worse with Rose.

Even Aunt Winifred spoke as if she were at present an insignificant individual.

"I will not say any thing about the length of the dress, but I must say that it is not suitable for the mills, and that those blue ribbons are altogether out of place," remarked Mrs. Stanton, but in very gentle tones.

Trot was not to be advised or persuaded, for she felt that all that was henceforth needed to convince every one of her experience and maturity, was to fight it out on her own line.

So the excursionists started, the youngest in not a very enviable frame of mind.

Ben and Bentie temporarily forgot the cambric dress in their deep interest in iron and its manufacture.

Ben conducted them first to the blast furnaces, where his apprenticeship was to begin the next week, and thence to the rolling-mills, where even Rose forgot herself and her childish longings in the vast labyrinths of roofs above their heads, the huge revolving wheels, the stalwart men rushing to and fro with broad bands of red-hot iron, and the fierce crush of the squeezers as they seized the glittering balls of quivering metal and freed them from their dross.

The two stood at a short distance from a pile of iron that was cooling before transportation to the nail factories. Their attention was absorbed by the work of two men who were passing a sheet of the hot metal over and under a wheel.

The day was a warm one, and, although the large fountain in the center of the inclosure was playing, and there were troughs of water at frequent intervals, the heat was insufferably oppressive.

With her eyes fixed on what so interested her, Rose kept stepping back from the hot iron in her neighborhood, back, and still back, until she stood in a draft where her garments fluttered about her airy and lithe form.

Suddenly, with a look of horror on his face, a man started toward her, and Ben turned to see the fatal cambric blowing toward a massive wheel about to revolve in a deep socket into which the water dashed with a hollow murmur.

The next moment the dress touched the wheel, and Rose, with a confused, bewildered look, was drawn toward the black monster. Ben seized her, but the dress was only too fast, and both were slowly carried onward as the wheel gave yet another move. With one

awful wrench backward, his arm about his sister, he fell and she was alone. But the dress had begun to tear, and the man, who was a giant in form and strength, coming up planted himself against a post and, hooking his arm around the terrified girl, he held her strained against his side as the wheel with her dress ascended.

She was saved, but the skirt of the beloved cambric was gone, and, like a mockery of its owner's ambition, clung limp and humiliated to the wheel as it plunged into the black abyss and began to revolve with awful rapidity.

Rose was motionless for a minute; then, a revulsion of feeling occurring, she sat down on a sooty bench and wept convulsively. She looked like a little black coal-picker with the dust all over the pretty waist, her small hands begrimed, and her face covered with white and black channels.

Bentie, now that danger was past, was affected in quite a different way, and, despite her efforts to the contrary, laughed peal after peal as she endeavored to wipe Rose's countenance clean with her handkerchief. Ben's tenderness all came out in this extremity, and, though his sister looked absurd, with not

enough of her dress left to make an apron, he never even smiled, and overwhelmed her with kind words and offers of assistance.

There was a deal of giggling among the small mill-boys as the crestfallen child started on her homeward walk. She was so subdued that she quite forgave Bentie for laughing, and when they reached the house sprang, with a long cry, into her mother's arms, exclaiming :

"O mamma, I have been so naughty. I will never wear my cambric again—that is, till it is shortened."

At this speech Ben was obliged to laugh and Rose to smile as she realized how very short the unfortunate garment really was.

"I mean I will never wear any more long dresses, not as long as I live." To this, through her tears and her smiles, as she comprehended the danger to which her precious daughter had been exposed, Mrs. Stanton soothingly replied :

"We understand it all. Just come up to mother's room."

What a blessed haven mother's room has proved to all of us! If we have concealed a naughty secret until it has burned into our con-

science, how afraid of that room we have been, lest, once within its precincts, we should feel constrained to confess. If we have been tossed and buffeted till we felt as though there were no friends or mercy for us in the whole world, how the sunshine of love and tenderness has come creeping over us in mother's room. If we have felt weak and helpless and longed for strength to meet the burdens pressing heavily upon us, how like the sacred cross to Christian was the door of mother's room to us. There the burden always drops ; the soul mounts ; those four walls, that warm bosom, those pitying tears, and that sweet kiss, make us forget even that, when we go out once more, there will be battles just as stern to fight, there will be places just as friendless, there will be wants just as unappeasable, there will be every-where the immortal longings of life. But all may come so long as the sanctuary, which is mother herself, remains in mother's room.

Trot came down stairs all pink and white and sweet. Her white dress, with its short skirt showing the finely formed feet, was prettier than the womanly dress of a few hours before.

Her father caught a glimpse of her from the

sitting-room, and, with as much boyishness as Ben now and then manifested, sprang through the open door, and, drawing her to him, kissed her tenderly.

"Where have you been all this time?"

"O, in mother's room."

Mr. Stanton nodded his head approvingly, and, taking his hat and Rose's from the hall table, gave her this mute invitation for a walk.

Bentie and Ben, meanwhile, had wandered from the house, down the steep side of the hill to a cool spring in a deep hollow underneath three lofty hemlocks.

With chestnut leaves cups were soon formed. While they sat beside the spring, occasionally bending over to dip a swallow of the clear water, and looking about as picturesque as they well could, the conversation turned upon the event of the morning.

"It seems a great pity to me, Bentie, that with all of Rose's admirable characteristics, she should be so conceited. It requires a continual snubbing process to keep her anywhere within bounds."

"Perhaps, Ben, she is snubbed too much," and Bentie peered down into the spring.

Ben looked thoughtful and asked, "What other means would you employ, then?"

"It seems to me, Ben, that what we call conceit argues one of two things: either that a person has decided ability, or that he hasn't any. Now, the first case is true as regards Rose. She cannot help knowing that in many things she is ahead of girls of her age. Knowing it, it is the most natural error in the world for her to commit, to try to make every one of her circumstances in harmony with what she considers her superiority. We have all, I think, in one way or another, treated Rose as if she were a deluded simpleton and a childish woman; that is, all except your mother. I was thinking over the cambric dress most of the time while I was watching them make iron, and was troubled because my manner had been so teasing in the morning."

Ben dipped and threw back the water several times and then, suddenly looking up, said:

"Bentie!"

She raised her eyes to see a puzzled yet decided expression on his face as he continued:

"What kind of a figure is Rose going to make in society?"

"No figure at all, as regards general popularity."

"But don't you think it better for a girl to be popular?"

"Y-e-e-s."

"Well, then?"

"Ben, the more precious any thing is, the less there is of it, and the fewer there are, consequently, to appreciate it. My observation leads me to believe that, as a general thing, a person who is extremely popular doesn't amount to a great deal. Of course there are exceptions. Now, Rose is no common girl. To most people she will often be incomprehensible. In general society she will frequently be misunderstood. But, Ben, there are generally enough people of one kind to make a pleasant society, and somehow they will manage to get together. Rose will have a few brilliant, intellectual friends when she becomes more mature, and they will satisfy."

"Men don't like such women," replied Ben.

"Not the majority, perhaps. But there are as many men to like them as there are such women; that is my theory, at least," added Bentie, laughing. "If the likes and dislikes of the multitude as regards them make no

difference to such women, what does it signify?"

Ben smiled in a nonplussed sort of a way, and then said :

"I can't help it, I like these domestic, feminine, unpretending girls, and I wish that my sister was one of them."

"Ben, Rose is just as feminine and just as domestic, and ten times more so, than that small Grace Doolittle, whom you admire so much. Now if I were a man"—and Bentie looked with profound wisdom up into the hemlock—"I should rather enjoy marrying a woman whom most other men let alone. Her love for me would be all the stronger; and then, too, I would feel complimented in the thought that I could appreciate what the multitude could not."

"There is no use in having a diamond if every one thinks it a pebble. I like girls who don't ruff up with every-day wear. Now you—"

There was a crackling of twigs on the hill above their heads, a laugh, and the fall of a pine cone.

The two looked up, Ben to regard Rose as a small white fate, determined to interrupt every interesting conversation in which he engaged.

Meanwhile his destiny requires us to give you a picture of Ben at actual work as an apprentice, and to compress into the remainder of this chapter the history of his success as a day-laborer and one of the managers and share-holders, at the age of twenty-three, in a large manufacturing company.

Bentie and Rose, after the first week of their sojourn at "The Heights," were compelled to seek their own amusement throughout the day. Ben was their escort, though, on many a pleasant ride and ramble and sail during the long summer evenings.

The Monday morning when, at the sound of the mill bell calling all hands to work, Ben stood on the hot floor at the summit of a blast-furnace, was a novel one to him.

It went somewhat against the grain to receive orders with as good a grace as if he were giving them; to toil from seven till twelve and from one till six under the hot sun; to eat his dinner out of a pail, and see his white hands grow red and feel them blister. But while doing all this he stood higher in his own estimation than he had ever done before.

"One of these days, when I order, my men

will know that what I command I have done myself," was his daily thought. "They will see that I am a trained soldier in the manufacturing army."

He remained at the blast furnace until he had learned all of the details of his business there. He came out in the winter bronzed, with large hands and sinewy muscles and shoulders broader than ever. Trot shed a few tears on seeing him at the holiday vacation, "because he did not look nice." Bentie, however, reiterated so often her expressions of admiration, that Ben teased Rose by telling her that she had false notions of the beautiful.

I should like to have you follow him in detail for another six months, while he serves in the rolling-mills. I wish you could have seen him at length toss with great dexterity the heavy bands of iron, and wait upon an old puddler until his own eyes could discover with considerable accuracy the state of the molten metal in the huge furnace. I wish you could have witnessed the honest delight he manifested in the praise he received for his general aptitude.

Do you think he lost his own self-respect or that of others? Not a bit of it. There

was not a laborer in the mills who did not, in meeting him on the streets, bow to him with a good-natured admiration that was truly inspiring. There was not one of his masters who did not warmly say that a college education, college honors, wealth, and culture, had somehow helped Ben in this the humblest and yet the greatest of all his experiences. There was not one member of the company who did not feel that when he took his father's share they would be proud to acknowledge him.

Thus the first fourteen months rolled away, and with them the most arduous season of his apprenticeship. Then followed a few months in the keg-factory, where he learned to pack nails for transportation; then several months in the nail-factory; and then, at last, he laid aside his mill habiliments, and, donning a suit made in accordance with Rose's likings, he entered the assayer's office, where he felt thoroughly in his element.

He studied with eagerness the various authors on metallurgy, and tested by practical experience each point learned. Every day, as he opened the door of the snug office, kept so clean that one would hardly have supposed,

when inside, that it was located in the midst of dusty mills, he looked around with serene eyes, planning here an easy-chair, and there a bird, and by the window a stand of flowers, and thought how complete the room would be with Bentie there as a student of assaying, and finally as the assayer of the mills.

"She is a girl with all of Rose's smartness and none of her conceit. Now I am certain that she could come here day in and day out, and meet with nothing but unobtrusive respect, because it would be all she would seem to expect."

When Ben talked the matter of Bentie's work over with his father, the latter sometimes smiled a little incredulously, and finally answered: "I think it is very important that girls as well as boys should learn some profession. They have it to fall back upon in case of need. But I do think this is a strange calling for such a quiet little girl as our Bentie. She ought to teach school, if she feels like doing something, after leaving college."

Ben shrugged his shoulders, and replied: "Bentie has always said that she would never like to teach, and she has always said that she would like to be an assayer. You advised me

to become an iron manufacturer, because the calling I would then follow would be in accordance with my tastes. I think the same rule ought to apply to Bentie."

"I haven't any decided objections. I am amused."

'Her Aunt Winifred wants her to try it. She says that she will come out here and board with Bentie while the latter is learning. Her office need not always be right where this one is, either.'

"No, I suppose not. If Bentie really wants to try, I shall place no obstacles in her way. I will take back what I said about teaching, too. It does seem as though there ought to be some other intellectual avenue open to a capable, intelligent girl. I do not know but that the best life-work Bentie can do while she is waiting to get married is to set an example of earnest, working independence to her young friends. Girls are too afraid of the judgment of the multitude, and do not sufficiently prize the warm praise of the most liberal Christian men and women."

Ben whistled more than ever around the office after this speech by his father. He watched the buds burst their amber folds, the river

swell to majestic dimensions, the spring flowers peep one by one above the mosses and the springing grass, and the glad, sweet, radiant light of April kiss every thing, even the old mills, with a beautifying touch.

April went. May trailed her dewy robes across the earth, and June, blushing, joyful, and queenly, like some heavenly visitor, glorified all nature, and ushered in a gladsome day on which Bentie was to receive her graduation laurels, and step forth into the world a happy, cultured, thoughtful, Christian woman.

## IV.

## CHARLEY GROWS AMBITIOUS.

LIFE, meanwhile, with Charley has not been idle. His experience has been a varied one. He sowed to the wind and he has reaped the whirlwind. But, unlike others who have done the same thing, he has gathered his unfortunate harvest so early that he feels there is time to sow once more and hope for a different crop.

Charley is fourteen now. He still has a fondness for elaborate neckties, still has a chain of Milton gold among his valuables, still wears an immense seal ring, for which he spent a month's earnings, and still dislikes books. But he is thoroughly dissatisfied with himself. He knows he is lazy. He knows he has disappointed his mother. He sees how far ahead of him in mental attainments Ben and Bentie and Rose are. He does not regard a notion-store in the light in which he once did. He feels ashamed of the leaves of absence he has

stolen from the store in order to attend the "Opera Bouffe," to see the "Black Crook," to hang about all of those most pernicious places for boys or men.

Behind the counter is a stock of small, yellow-covered novels, for which he has expended countless dimes. Some of the titles read as follows: "Jack, the Rover;" "The Wreckers of Hurricane Bay;" "The Angel of the Prairie;" "The Successes of a Wild Young Man;" "The Broken Heart of Mazie Tripple." These and others like them are the mental food on which he has fed for three years. He knows that these vile things he has seen, these unnatural books he has read, have given him tastes in which none of the friends he most respects can sympathize, and have so affected his mind that, when he takes up a history of Queen Elizabeth or of any other great woman, to read, he thinks of Mazie Tripple; when he would admire Abraham Lincoln, the character of "Jack the Rover" is the only one he distinctly sees.

It is an awful state of mind that, when one sees he is all wrong, and yet seems utterly powerless to set himself right.

Occasionally, of late, after returning from the

store, his mind more or less engrossed with the new aspect of things, Charley has looked up from his reading with an abstracted glance for one so young, and has found his mother's eyes fixed questioningly and sadly upon him.

Charley is a handsome, attractive boy. His black eyes, so tender and yet so brilliant, his regular features, his robust form, are all that could be desired. There is, however, a languid look about him, which betrays a trouble he will always have to struggle against, a natural propensity to extreme idleness.

One evening, when Ben and Rose kept flitting back and forth before his mind's eye at a most aggravating rate, he looked up to his mother, and said :

"Mother, I guess your boy is a failure. I am sick of myself and sick of every one but you."

Charley, to her surprise, became so much of a little boy again, that he threw himself down on the floor beside her and put his head into her lap.

Too full of tears and new hopes to speak, she softly stroked the glossy black curls.

He knew that she was crying. Pretty soon his own tears began to fall in great, hot beads,

and he shook convulsively. Then, of his own accord, he confessed about the novels, the low theaters, his dissatisfaction with his business, and his feeling of ignorance.

She did not scold or tell him that he had been a very wicked and disobedient child, or once speak of her three years of disappointment and sorrow. But she did say :

“Charley, my dear child, you are naturally indolent and obstinate. Mother knows that your life must always be a failure unless you can for a few years trust yourself completely to her judgment, and let her help you to habits of industry ; and then”—Charley felt the loving tears fall upon his forehead—“there is for you a wiser, better Friend than your mother, who has also been waiting for you to return to him, Jesus Christ. We have both been listening for a great many weary months, Charley dearest, to hear a word of prayer from your lips. Do you think it is well to delay any longer ?”

“Pray for me now, mother.

They knelt down. After the mother prayed the son did. He offered himself anew to Christ. He prayed for forgiveness. He prayed for strength. And then when he arose he

asked his mother's forgiveness. After that they had such a loving and confidential talk as they had not enjoyed since leaving the farm.

"Mother, I should like to resign my position in the notion-store, if you think it best."

"It is what I have been hoping for a long time you would want to do. But what will you engage in then?"

"You are to decide, mother. I should like, to please you, to go to school. I think I should have perseverance enough to study now."

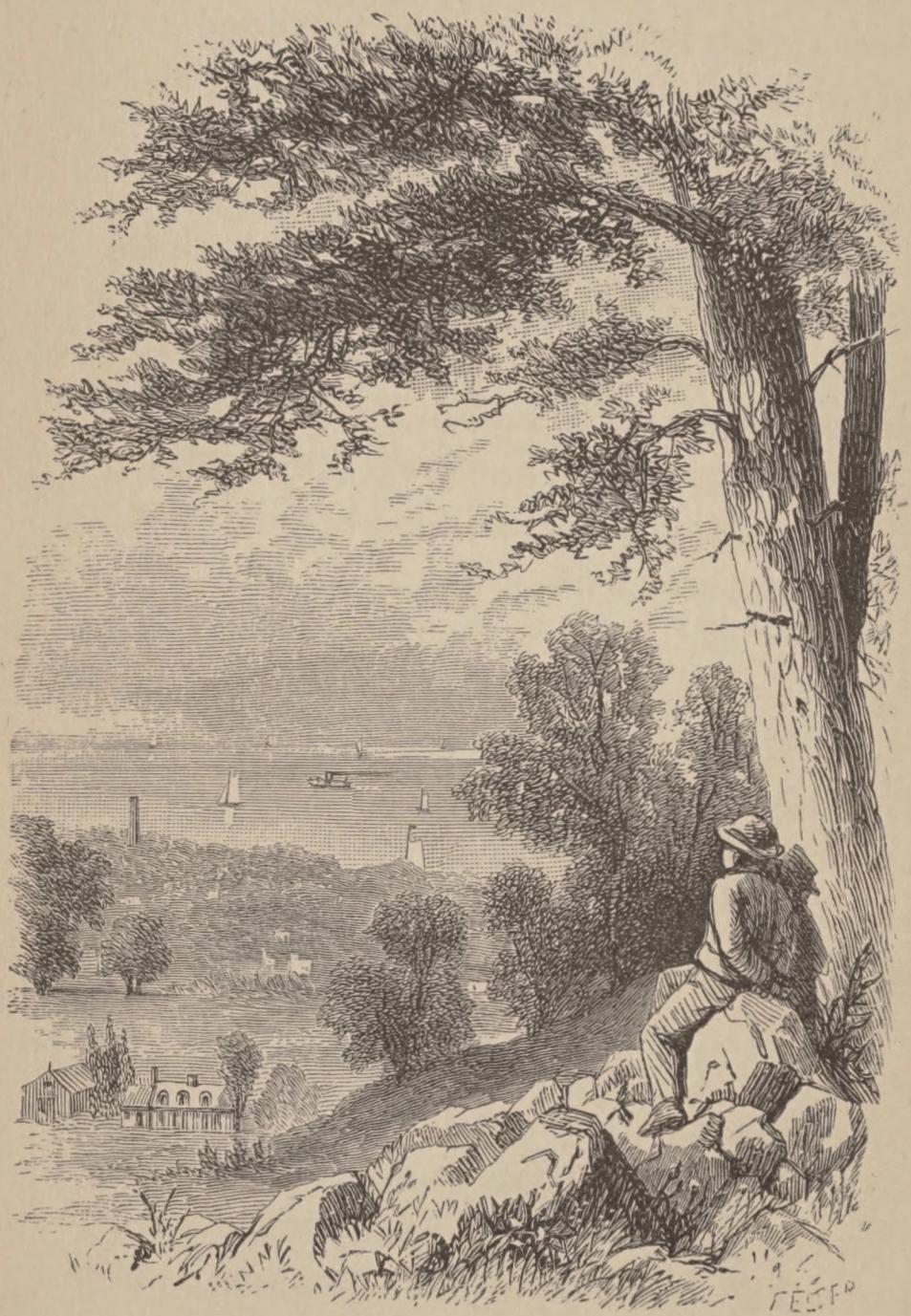
"I feel very anxious to have you study, Charley, but it is for your own good. You can't get along when you become a man unless you learn to study in some way. There is not a successful man in this city who has not, to a considerable extent, either educated himself or attended school until he possessed the rudiments of a sound English education. There is too much competition in this democratic country of ours for a man to win power, unless he has more than ordinary ability or ordinary culture. But study faithfully a year, for my sake, and then I feel quite sure you will study for your own."

"Mother, I should like to go back to the farm for a few days. It seems to me that if I were with the grass and the flowers and the birds for a while I could get a better start."

So they returned for a month.

Charley arose the first morning after their arrival and drank in the fresh May air, with all that exhilaration one feels on return to his native place after long absence. After breakfast he went out to wander over the farm and ponder on his new prospects. He slowly walked across the grass-plot at the rear of the house, then down the path toward the meadow, keenly enjoying the fresh new things just peeping above the ground. Even the onions looked wholesome and cheering. The lettuce heads were crisp and curly. The sunshine glistened the sweetest smiles to the flowers growing side by side with the vegetables, and laid a silver crown on the brow of the hill toward which his steps were directed. He came to a little brook whose bridge of rough logs, sawn in two and laid loosely together, were covered along the edges with bits of moss—a bridge evidently that had not often been crossed of late years. It was set in a little dimple of land—between two knolls that





Charley on the Hill-top.

swept up the side of the hill toward the summit where they became one and overlooked a low plateau on which the house was situated.

Charley got down on his knees on the bridge and leaned over the water, watching it ripple past the little stones, or become disturbed by the darting of pollywigs or fishes. He threw off his hat and bathed his temples in the cool, fresh water. It felt pleasant. He slowly climbed the hill, patting and pressing down with his feet the velvety, new grass, and thinking how much softer and more beautiful it was than the handsomest carpet he had ever trodden. The very dandelions seemed to nod their heads as though they had been planted in the best place in the whole world.

When he reached the brow of the hill and looked out over the distant Sound, at the quiet farm-houses nestling in among the hills, at the patient cows grazing near the spot where he stood, and above, at the fleecy white clouds sailing off toward the ocean, he experienced a great rest. He sat down and leaned his head against a hemlock that stood like a sentinel on the hill, and, closing his eyes, basked in the warm and penetrating light.

He could not help comparing the city streets, the widest of which seemed contracted, with the winding lanes, the broad, green fields, and the illimitable ocean.

Somewhat he felt at home. He did not feel altogether ignorant. He began estimating the probable harvest from this field and that, the value of the cattle browsing almost at his feet, and the amount of yearly profit to be gained from just such a farm as his mother's.

He had long ago lost his desire to keep a hotel. It seemed to him as though he never could enter a store again. He knew that he had not shrewdness sufficient to be a lawyer, and he did not believe he would ever have goodness enough to be a minister. "There isn't much else left but farming," and Charley, stretching himself out on the grass, heaved a great sigh. "O dear, I wish I were smarter!" and then, his natural obstinacy seizing him, he said :

"Farming is just as good as any thing else. You don't have any bosses. You are not cramped within four walls every day. If you are not worth a cent, you can own a horse and go all over. Geed eup!" he cried with

all the twang of a broad Yankee dialect, and he snapped his fingers to an imaginary horse. "You always have plenty to eat," he continued contemplatively. "And then, how many kinds of business you can have all at the same time on a farm. Mother is a natural-born florist. I could be a horticulturist and"—catching a flash of the ocean in his eyes—"a clam-merchant. I warrant the iron-manufacturer and the chemist and the doctor would enjoy a visit to my farm."

Charley sat up and looked around.

"I do wonder if mother would be very much disappointed if I should turn out, after all, nothing but a farmer."

He rose, stretched himself again, looked a little sleepily out of his great black eyes, and started down the hill, full of thoughts of his new business.

When evening came and they were seated on the porch, the sweet and odorous spring breeze softly fanning their temples, Charley said, with quite a doleful pitch to his voice: "What profession have you chosen for me, mother?"

"I have not chosen any."

"Well, what do you wish me to be?"

"I want you to be *something*. I do not care what it is, if you will only work at it with your might and main."

"I suppose you would be disappointed, though, if I were a farmer?" with a melancholy cadence in his voice.

"Why, Charley, your father was a farmer."

"Yes, but he was a minister first."

The boy looked as though he felt such a combination for himself an awful impossibility.

"He was not so good a farmer as he would have been had he taken up the business earlier in life. I should be sorry to see you attempt, when a man, two distinct occupations."

"Why did father do so?"

"He would never have left the ministry if his health had not failed. But, Charley, I certainly shall not be satisfied with you as a farmer unless you take all the preliminary steps that Ben is taking, before entering upon his life-work. You cannot be too well prepared."

"Go through college!" and Charley looked up in dismay.

"Through the grammar school and high school, and then through college."

"Why, see how old I will be. I am fourteen now!"

"Twenty-four or five, probably," said his mother quietly.

"Wouldn't I be too old to learn my business then?"

"O, you know something of it now. Besides, there are the long summer vacations. You could not have a better time to study farming."

"I shall want to rest then," said Charley dolefully.

"Change is rest. After studying, as I expect you will"—and she looked at him with such fondness that her gaze went right to his heart—"it will do you good to exercise your muscles."

"I have not fully decided to be a farmer, you must remember, mother."

"I hope not. One lesson you have to learn is that of making decisions deliberately. I shall be perfectly satisfied though, Charley, if, after a thorough discipline at school and college, my boy does settle down on the dear old homestead, to beautify it and to exemplify the truth that science, rightly practiced, is fully as conducive to riches in the country as in the city."

"I really should like to be a farmer. But what a tremendous sight of work there is before me."

He drew a very long sigh and said: "I guess it is time to go to bed."

Here we shall have to leave him, as he is not yet a man, only a few years older, in fact, than the events in his history I have been recording. But during these years he has been a faithful though not a brilliant student, and his mother has strong hopes that finally, in his case, the fable of the tortoise and the hare will be exemplified. She often encourages him by saying: "The race is not always to the swift."

So long as a mother hopes and loves, God prospers.

## V.

## BENTIE SOLVES SOME LIFE-PROBLEMS.

BENTIE had been at college five years. Two more were to roll around before she would leave the place whose beauty had become doubly beautiful through association.

In her college home she had been confronted with life-problems as difficult and quite as intricate as any she would ever have to solve. She was a thinking girl. The subtlety of motive, the result of action, its reflex influence, her individual responsibility, were daily brought before her judgment. All of these cases in her own life, and in the lives of others on which she passed a mental verdict, developed her.

Fortunately, O so fortunately for her, she was thrown with teachers and companions who had wills and minds of their own. She thus learned in deepest conviction that one of the sweetest and yet weightiest responsibilities God had given her, was to manage the

intricate engine of a trained will ; to direct its course along that way of life which leads the mind up steep grades to heights whence it can behold the majesty of eternity, and irresistibly impels the soul toward that point in its experience when it is thrilled with lofty, intellectual, and adoring love for its Creator.

Bentie loved self, as does every body else. "Man, love thyself, 'tis being's first command," floated before her mental vision a hundred times in her decisions against self. Living as she did, in daily contact with hundreds, it was a nice question to solve as to just how much was her due and how much was not. A member of a class of fifty, and an ambitious member, she queried many a night as to just how much of the class-glory she might honestly seek. A Christian, she wondered just how far she could love the vain pomp and glory of the world. A girl, she pondered on the solemn issue confronting, nowadays, every highly educated woman, as to what, in this day of "woman shall do this, and woman shall do that," she might with propriety and dignity undertake. And like some tender melody sounding through one played loudly, she read the music ringing low

and sweet from all those humbler destinies that had, through her unselfishness, become interwoven with her own.

It was just after sunset. The early twilight glory was fading from the distant mountains, a faint, pink glow still permeated the atmosphere, spreading over the level grounds in the immediate vicinity of the college, and softly falling upon a group of a half dozen young ladies clustered in a broad western window on the fourth floor. The room was a corner one; its sole habitual occupant was Bentie. The evening in question was in the latter part of the May of her senior year. The group in her room was composed wholly of classmates. Such gatherings, sometimes found in one Senior room and sometimes in another, were of almost daily occurrence. If any thing of weight, as a question that involved incipient seditions, or indignation against the faculty was up, the girls liked to have Bentie in the number. If she thought things were a little out of order, it gave the others sanction to think them in a desperate condition. If she had nothing to object to what they resolved, they felt authorized to continue.

Bentie had the reputation of being a con-

servative. "But," said Adah Middleton, who, having long ago dropped any thing approaching sentiment with regard to Bentie, nevertheless took a class-pride in her standing and her honor, "if you do once get Bentie started and off her guard, she goes to greater lengths than any of us would. She is the most courageous member of the class."

"I thought all that long ago," replied Martha Livingstone. "Bentie Winthrop, whether on her guard or off her guard, has always had the courage to do what she thought right. I don't believe any of the rest of us have as pure a record in this respect."

"These extremely proper people are generally hypocritical," replied Adah. And then, her honesty not allowing her to let her friends make the logical application, she continued, "I have never caught Bentie Winthrop, though, in any thing hypocritical."

The subject of conversation came along at this juncture, and beguiled the group to her room with a promise of pickles—an inducement sufficient any day to lure girls to endless distances.

The pickles having been disposed of, and unanimously voted deliciously sour, the ques-

tion for consideration proposed was: "Whether the Seniors had 'spunk' enough to override the faculty, either secretly or otherwise, in introducing a drama on the night of their exit from college society life, in which male and female characters should be personated." The girls, with the exception of Martha and Bentie, all voted that it would be capital. They wanted it as much as the others, and could not refrain from laughing heartily as Adah graphically portrayed the arrangements which would be necessary for "Midsummer Night's Dream."

"We can have the lion, too—a roaring lion. The effect will be perfectly irresistible."

"O if it is to be something out of order, let us have a caricature of 'Romeo and Juliet,'" exclaimed another.

"But male characters are not allowed," expostulated Bentie, as soon as she could get a word in.

"That is just the point," interrupted Adah. "Here we have been all of these long years without being allowed to do this thing and that thing, until I feel tempted to break my neck because that wouldn't be allowed."

"Well," said Martha, looking out of the

window a little thoughtfully, "we have succeeded in living through this strait-jacket discipline thus far, and I, for one, should like to part good friends with the faculty. I suspect when we get a few years older we will look upon pickles and mixed dramas somewhat differently. Let's give the rebellion up and consider what we must do as Seniors to set an example to those presuming Juniors aching to see us go."

But Adah and all of the others, except Bentie and Martha, insisted on "Midsummer Night's Dream," and there, in her room!—not very lady-like, she could not help thinking—the arrangements were made, and the next Friday night, owing to their being Seniors, the party carried the matter into society and imposed secrecy.

Did Bentie tell?

No. She never reported an outbreak or irregularity of any kind. If this seems unfair to the faculty I will defend her by saying that she truly feared the influence on herself; she feared becoming a newsmonger. The habit of gossiping and tattling grows very easily, and is a tyrant whose yoke one cannot readily shake off,

The evening for the entertainment came in due time.

The king sat on his throne. Titania was there arrayed in all of her diminutive glory. The lion stalked forth with a mighty roar, carrying his artificial tail, it is true, rather limp, but, nevertheless, bringing the house down with claps and laughter. While he stood on the small stage, in lion-like majesty, a curtain was pushed aside, and, from some invisible back-door, the president of the college appeared upon the scene. And the court adjourned.

How did he find it out? How does he ever find out? It is a part of his business to make just such discoveries, and if you search the records of most schools you will find that he is the fifth act in about every secret drama ever played within his dominions.

Adah told Bentie that she hoped the class would not be invited again to "350" to eat pickles. At this implied rebuke Bentie waxed a little indignant.

Although the drama met with such an ignominious fate, questions for future discussion were not wanting. One of great importance and of daily growing interest as April days

came and went was: "What shall we wear on Commencement Day?"

Bentie thought of Ben, and, remembering how resplendent he had shone in the expensive outfit in which he had stepped out into life, set her heart upon a white satin.

"I have gone all these years as demure and plain, at watering-places and all, as could be," she wrote to Aunt Winifred; "and now don't you think I deserve the satin? Some of the girls say that they never expect to marry, and that they mean, therefore, to have their *trousseaus* on Commencement Day. Don't you think I would better make sure of one? Now coax papa for me for the satin."

While Aunt Winifred is going around for a day or two in a bewildered way, wondering if Bentie has become demoralized or crazy, she receives another letter, saying:

"Tell papa that he is on no account to buy me a satin. We have had a class meeting, and none of us are going to wear satin. We have decided to appear as we do in ordinary life and see whether we will be considered a brilliant class and all that sort of eulogy. And tell papa, and I mean you, too, that he isn't to buy me a single new thing. I think I have

enough to begin life with as an educated woman. O, dear me! this letter doesn't sound elegant or any thing else but *Bentyish*. I am afraid that I shall never be 'grown up' when I write to you."

Bentie's change of mind about the satin dress was induced, as she said in her letter, by a class meeting.

Previous classes had appeared before parents and friends in all that bewildering cloud-land of muslin, lace, powdered hair, and sparkling jewelry, which is a poem though not a word be uttered. Should the class of '69, do likewise? Such an original set of young women! Should they depart from Alma Mater with exactly as many ruffles as their predecessors? With orations and essays that had precisely the same ring and a general effect that gave them the appearance of having been run in the same mold with those of a hundred other classes?

No!

So the fifty members met to consider how they could be different, and, at the same time, cover themselves with glory.

"Will some one state the object of the meeting?" asked the president of the class.

Bentie arose.

“ Miss President: The members of the class of '69 have been under the same course of instruction for four years, and many of us have been students in this college for a period of six years. We came here to have our minds educated beyond the average curriculum prescribed for young women. We came here, indeed, to acquire through a college course, not only a superior education, but also an unusual amount of common sense. The question to be submitted to the class is a common-sense one, and is, that we as a class discard what are known as commencement-dresses, and also all of their accessories, and appear before the friends of the college in a neat house-costume.”

“ Do you put your statement as a motion, Miss Winthrop?”

“ I do.”

“ The question before the class is,” repeated the president, “ that we discard commencement-dresses, with all their accessories, and graduate in simple house-costume. Is the motion seconded?”

“ I second it,” responded Martha Livingstone.

"Remarks are in order." And the president looked over the class.

Up rose a majestic girl—her brilliant color and black eyes heightened in effect by her plain but elegant dress.

"Will the first speaker define what she means by house-costume?"

"I mean what we as individuals wear in the afternoon," was the reply.

"I should like to ask the object of this innovation?"

Bentie looked around for some one else to speak, but the others were waiting for her, and so she arose again.

"Miss President: It is possible and altogether probable that in a class of fifty the pecuniary circumstances of the members vary greatly. It seems to me that we, as a class, professing to esteem the true culture of the woman of chief importance, may do a necessary work, if we break down one of the hindrances to a high education by discouraging and discarding many of the expenses incident to a Commencement. I think elaborate dress a useless expense. There have been commencement-outfits purchased by members of this college which have cost several hundred

dollars. I think it is all wrong, and a libel on our standing as scholars and liberal women."

The first speaker on the opposite side resumed the floor.

"Miss President: We have lived harmoniously together for four years, some of us exchanging the calico of the morning for the calico of the afternoon; others exchanging the morning garment for one of cashmere, silk, or other expensive material. Now, if we appear individually on Commencement Day in our afternoon dress, there will be not only irregularity in quality and style, but also in color, and the whole effect of our appearance as a class will be ruined. Those who wish inexpensive dresses can have them, but I think we ought all to appear in white and wear gloves. Just as soon as we leave college we shall have to meet with and accept the inequalities due to a difference in wealth."

Bentie began to grow a little excited as she saw the impression that Maria Riverton's remarks made, and, with a little tremble in her voice, responded:

"I am sure that no one wants to advocate uniformity in every-day apparel. No one denies that economy and self-sacrifice will have

to be practiced by some when they are through college. But, Miss President, the fact is here: I know there are young women in this institution who, possessing one or two good dresses, have expended all the money either they or their parents can well spare. These dresses are, moreover, suitable for any occasion. What I propose is that we do not as a class launch into the extravagance of purchasing an outfit that we may never wear again. There is a heavy enough tax as it is upon the class for incidental expenses."

Adah Middleton rose and said, with a mock assumption of gravity:

"I move, as an amendment to the first speaker's motion, that we not only discard 'commencement-dresses,' but the band, the flowers, and the supper we once considered essential for Class Day, the elegant invitations that we were to have issued for that occasion; and also that we send in a petition to the faculty that we be allowed to take our final departure from the college through the kitchen-department."

Bentie's face flushed angrily.

Another member rose, one who did not often "speak in meeting." She was a girl

with a grave, sweet countenance, and one whose wardrobe had been conspicuously plain. She stood there among the fifty with no other ornaments than the ruffles at throat and wrist, and a wealth of soft brown hair that shone like a halo in the light streaming through the windows from the setting sun. She was one of the honor-girls.

"Miss President: If the class will excuse an allusion to self, I should like to say a few words. Through money gained by two years of teaching, and other funds which I was obliged to borrow, I have been able to spend three years in college and to meet all incidental expenses. I have not, however, been able to take a part in societies or in any of the social relaxations so many have enjoyed in their rooms. I tell all this, something I have not mentioned before, to call attention to the views of one who does have to practice strict economy. I agree with the first two speakers that it is right we should expect to meet with a greater variety in costume out of school; and I can see no direct question of right and wrong as regards independence in dress in school. But this is the deciding point in my mind. This college was founded for the higher

education of young women. All over the length and breath of our land are girls of superior endowments and attainments who wish to come here simply because of the completeness of the institution. Better opportunities are afforded here than in any other college for women. I am acquainted with girls who say that they could meet the actual school expenses, but that they have not the courage to stand the social pressure. Some may say that they ought to have the moral courage. Well, that is so. But men and women who bless the world when they begin to help people, take them as they are and not as they ought to be. As a class we are dreading the loss we shall feel in our respective homes, of a large circle of girls of superior mental culture. We look forward to the time when girls will be ashamed of a smattering, and a higher education will be general with our sex. It seems to me, therefore, that it is our duty, as a class, to sacrifice any thing on a day exclusively ours, that will stand in the way of the intellectual advancement of girls. I ought, perhaps, to say, to convince you that my opinion is given regardless of personal expense, that my white dress is made, my gloves are purchased; in short, that

all my outfit necessary for Commencement is ready."

Bentie tried to raise a clap and was moderately successful. Cecilia, as she sat down, drew a long, suppressed breath of relief.

"Are there any further remarks?" asked the president.

Up jumped a dumpy little creature with a rosy face and the merriest blue eyes, teeth that seemed to laugh in company with her mouth, and a nose that turned as naturally upward as did her bonnie sweet eyes.

"Miss President: I am afraid if I begin that I will, like the speakers before me, make an address." At this there was a great ripple of laughter from the class. "But, before I do say any thing wise, I mean any thing solemn—for what I am going to say ought to be, at least, next-door neighbor to wise—Cecelia Marston is a heroine."

The president tapped her mallet and, trying to suppress a smile, said:

"No personalities."

"Then I'll make my speech." The round, aspiring nose gave a characteristic dimple. "We are going to get upon that rostrum on Commencement Day, or rather some of you

are—the honor-girls have let me read their effusions, and I know what I am saying—and they are going to talk about the ‘Civilization of the World,’ the ‘Advance of Woman,’ the ‘Poetry of Common-sense,’ ‘Life-problems,’ and ever so many other hifalutens—”

“ Oh ! ” resounded through the hall in a tone of horror.

“ Excuse me, Miss President, I mean *knowing* subjects. Now, I think they would better practice what they preach, and work out the right answer to the problem they are on at this very moment.”

Patty took her seat with a bustle that made every one aware, herself included, of her silk dress. She drew a wry face and then, turning to Cecilia, whispered, “ You wear an alpaca dress, and I will.”

Still another speaker arose ; the “aristocrat” of the class.

“ Miss President : I confess to little interest in these wonderful civilizing topics. I do not believe that the mere fact of one class dressing after a fashion of its own will set a fashion for other classes or exert a moral influence worth any thing. But I do think it is a senseless way of managing matters, to have fifty young

ladies look like fifty peas out of the same pod one particular day of their lives. I favor a departure, because I wish to dress to suit myself, and because I think I can arrange a neat home-dress that will be more stylish than a regular commencement-outfit. So I should like to see the original motion carried."

Bentie was on her feet again.

"I think we ought to make the matter one of principle."

"Perhaps every one does not see principle in the color of a dress."

"The question is not on the color of a dress. It ought, at least, to be discussed in a business-like manner."

The "aristocrat" smiled wearily, and made no reply.

Adah said, "Some of the class see so little business in the question that they do not consider it worth their serious attention."

"Order!" tapped the president.

The "oldest member" rose.

"Miss President: It has been suggested that we do away with all class-expenses. May I be allowed to say that I consider this suggestion senseless. In the first place, on Class Day and Commencement, we invite our friends, not to

look at us, but to hear us. As hostesses, moreover, would it not be in good taste for us to dress at least no more conspicuously than our guests, and to expend all of our thought on making the two days literary in their character? Our friends are not invited to a party or a ball, but to a literary entertainment. Any thing that will heighten the effect of class-day and commencement exercises will, therefore, be legitimate. The first question, then, to consider is: Are outfits for Commencement Day essential?"

There was applause.

Bentie rose.

"Miss President: I withdraw my first motion, and move that, as commencement-dresses are not essential, we discard them."

"I second the motion," came from several quarters.

"Any remarks?" said the president.

But there were no remarks. The vote was taken, and Bentie's second motion carried the day. "Life-problems are very mixed in their character," was her last thought for that day.

Meanwhile, the hours flew apace. Through May were the closing examinations. These

and her graduating essay were among her special life-problems.

Bentie did not enjoy the glory of being an honor-girl as much as she thought she would.

Only ten out of the fifty were allowed to appear on Commencement Day. All the fifty had been in the college for from four to six years. All had toiled more or less faithfully to reach the final goal and leave an honorable record. Fifty families and a host of friends for each graduate looked forward with fond hopes to that final day. Forty had been obliged to write home that they were not to rank in the first third of the class. Bentie, in the midst of her happy preparations, could not forget the night when the news came from faculty meeting as to the few who were chosen. She remembered the tearless but proud, sad eyes of one girl who had studied unremittingly, and whose every hope lay in her success as a scholar. She recalled the convulsive short-drawn sigh of an impulsive classmate who had studied, it is true, by fits and starts, but who stood well—and then her breaking down before them all and whispering to Bentie, "Papa will be so disappointed!" And then, knowing that one or two of the

honor-girls were glib of tongue, but not profound in scholarship, she could not help feeling that even so learned a body as a faculty failed sometimes in sounding the depths.

So, instead of retiring on that eventful night in a maze of happy feeling, she was subdued; and, while thanking God for all of his special providences unto her, she prayed to be kept humble and made wise to understand the truth throughout her life. Then, too, her ambitions had not been altogether realized! Ben had graduated valedictorian. For two years she had longed to do the same. And she had not even been mentioned for that honor. She confided her disappointment to her father, who wrote her:

“ You have done well enough. I fear to see a young person succeed too easily, for the majority of those who attain distinction early fail to do so later. My chief desire for you is, that you shall in the future, as you have done in the past, develop slowly but symmetrically. Always take time, my darling, to be strong.”

This greatly comforted Bentie. Perhaps her moderate success saved her from egotism and enlarged her charity. At all events, she

was going to graduate without that uncomfortable self-consciousness and amusing ignorance of life's great ends that so many college boys and girls manifest. There was one fact of which she felt sure. She had so fitted herself for a teacher, that, should her father's wealth take wing and fly away, she possessed in herself the means of self-support. "And now, if I have health and opportunity to carry out Ben's plans and mine, I shall have two professions." In accordance with this thought, when her "Senior vacation" came, quite to the surprise of many in the class who knew nothing of her hopes, she persisted in daily spending hours in the laboratory. When expostulated with, she replied: "I love chemistry."

"But your examinations are over, and I should think you would hate the sight of books for a while," said Adah.

"Why, Adah, it is a real rest to me to see what is in all these bottles and drawers, and to study up those points on which I did not have time to dwell when I was going over them in class. I would rather work down here than go to my meals."

"You are the queerest girl!" was the reply.

"For my part, I intend to rest a few months on the fact that I have finished. Some disagreeable duty will turn up soon enough."

"Adah," and Bentie paused an instant—a retort in one hand and a bottle in the other—"I feel so happy and peaceful nowadays, that I do not believe any thing or any body could be very disagreeable to me."

"O!" and Adah elevated her eyebrows and replied, "I could not be so placid and wouldn't if I could. This whole place and every body in it seems so tiresome, now that I am through. I could not stay another day, if it were not for our Junior party and the class-fun."

Adah had been out of sorts with the college for half a year. She had the uncomfortable consciousness that a great many felt that there was not much of the woman about her, and that she had cultivated her intellect and indulged her selfishness at a dear cost to herself and others. She really did feel as if it were time for her to go somewhere else.

On the other hand, Bentie's heart was full of that gentleness and love which come to almost all on the eve of a separation, if they can, by the looks and deeds and words of those around them, somewhat estimate the wealth of love

they have aroused. The dear old college was like a mother, and every body was a great deal better than herself. She hoped that when she reached home her life would bless others in the same rich manner in which many lives had showered benedictions upon her pathway. She did hope that her father would grow gladder and gladder because he had sent his only girl through college. With these thoughts, notwithstanding Adah's badinage, she worked on in the laboratory till the very last day.

## VI.

## BENTIE'S GRADUATION

HERE is nothing like a bustle. Life seems then to grow apace. There is nothing like change. Years are counted by events.

To Bentie, passing through the exciting and varied scenes of closing days, there was an exhilaration in the sweet June skies, a light in every eye, a hope in every step. Success was heralded from one end of the breezy corridors to the other, until she wondered whether the struggles and the headaches and the failures of her school-life were not all a dream, and she secure in a haven of everlasting prosperity.

It is good that girls can have visions of earthly bliss, that boys can be monarchs in their youth, supreme rulers even when they are under the most stringent rulers. It is good that the heavens above us are glorious with Spanish castles and the earth below gold-crowned and pure as a daisy-field and with

nothing but the flowers of hope and youth to make it so. It is good for us all, bless God! that, whether hope be of the past in sweetest memories, or of the near future in glad anticipations, or for the invisible Heaven in purified and patient waiting, it never dies, never grows old, and yet is always circled with a halo of eternal youth. Hope belongs to us all, and yet is the sweet, glad, secret possession of each soul.

If I talk much longer in this vein you will say I am preaching a sermon. That is the farthest from my present intentions. Indeed, just now my mind is filled with a fair picture of these stately rooms all in a twitter with the gay voices and merry laughter of a bevy of girls engaged in decorating the pictures with graceful vines, the windows with hanging-baskets, and every imaginable nook with flowers.

"This shall be the most attractive Junior party ever given in the college," exclaimed one girl, stepping at a distance from a lovely landscape to note its effect in a wreath of delicate smilax and rich English ivy. "You would leave it so, wouldn't you, Cassie?"

"Yes, indeed! It is exquisite. Yes, I want

our entertainment of the Seniors to be in every respect the most elegant of any given here. I hope it will pass off without a single jar. The Seniors of this year are a very respectable class, too, notwithstanding the dignity of their class is shadowed by the dawning glory of ours."

"O let us cease underrating the Seniors, now that we are alone. To tell the truth, Cassie, if I thought that we would do as well in examinations, and could have as much class character, I would feel satisfied."

"I suppose," said Cassie, "that those Seniors who were disappointed over the action of the class as regards commencement dresses will make a grand toilet for to-night."

"I wonder what Bentie Winthrop will wear."

"Something elegant, I dare say—that is, elegant in fit and style. But she wont appear with a fortune on her back, that I am sure of."

"I do not believe," said Franc, "that I would have the courage to dress plainly and without any display of jewelry for four long years, as she has done. They say, too, that she is immensely wealthy."

"Perhaps she doesn't care for such things."

"Yes, she does. She did have a very elegant pink silk made for one of the entertainments. It was all trimmed with point lace, and was just lovely. And then at the very last minute she put on a simple organdie, because, as she said, it did not seem right to dress so elaborately while at school."

"What did she do with the silk?" exclaimed Cassie. "If I had such a dress, I think I should wear it."

"She put it away till vacation, when she appeared in it at a couple of parties and where it looked suitable."

"Well, I am glad that she isn't one of the kind who would discard all richness and elegance in dress just because every body cannot wear silks and satins. I thought that was her doctrine."

"O no. You have to be in the same parlor with Bentie Winthrop, though, to understand her. You would soon find out that one of her striking characteristics was a fine sense of the proprieties. Every thing in dress, in conversation, in manner, has its place with her. She seems to understand in a moment what she is to say, or do, or even wear, to

make every one around her comfortable and contented."

"Not always," replied Cassie. "I know two or three in her class who dislike her extremely."

"I do, too. But they dislike her because she has been true to principle right straight through her career here. With all her quietness she is no coward. I suppose you refer for one to Adah Middleton. Really, Cassie, I shouldn't feel highly complimented to have Adah Middleton for one of my admirers."

"Some say that Adah is by far the smartest in her class. I can overlook a great deal if a person is smart. There is a kind of slowness, for instance, about Bentie, that I should think would sometimes exasperate a girl like Adah."

"Bentie is thorough. Adah is versatile; she knows a thing to say it, but she isn't much of a thinker. And even if she is, as you say, the smartest in her class, I think that is all the more reason why she should be the best in every other respect. The day is past, my dear, for brilliant people to be stumbling-blocks in moral influence. You know there isn't a girl who is acquainted with Adah Middleton but that likes her with a proviso.

If hers is the career of all smart girls, I, for one, would rather know a little less."

Cassie went humming away to a flower-stand and for a minute made no reply; then, turning to Franc, she said: "Don't you think that, generally, people who have a mania for brain culture without heart culture are those who are conscious of possessing little depth of moral purpose?"

Franc's face lighted as she replied: "Yes; and what does it matter, after all, if one is not brilliant? We have an eternity to grow in; so long as we have, why not develop evenly? Brilliant people are usually one-sided. They do very well in books, but they are not the ones to live happily with nor those from whom we can learn the most. I like the men and women who by their lives suggest a general goodness and excellence. Bentie Winthrop will make such a woman."

Meanwhile there had been just as earnest talks among the Seniors about the Junior party. It had always been a custom in the institution for the Junior class to give the Senior class a party, at which there was, of course, a suspension of class-hostilities, and a general oneness of sentiment wonderful to

behold. Each successive Junior class endeavored to make its party a masterpiece, and each successive Senior class made a point of considering itself more handsomely entertained than was ever any predecessor. So the Seniors of Bentie's time were through the day gathered here and there in groups, discussing the party with as much earnestness and expectation as they had any they had ever attended at their homes. They even tried to peep into the suite of parlors being prepared for them, in order to express their commendation to the Juniors.

But the latter would open to no Senior "sesame," and not until evening, when the gas was brilliantly lighted and the study-bell—most unwelcome sound—was rung for students of lower grades, were the rooms thrown open, and the Juniors, looking in their dignity of hostesses like experienced women with very youthful faces, were ready to receive the faculty and their most honored guests.

It is wonderful how necessity will develop resources. Many a girl had come to the college with little previous social culture, but possessed of ready tact. A year or two had toned the roughnesses, had smoothed out the

idiosyncrasies, had given a general knowledge of "what to do," that fitted her to be a molding influence in the narrow circle to which she was perhaps destined to return.

Of the Junior class the president was a notable example of this kind. One would not have recognized the awkward girl of three years before in the one to whom Bentie stood paying her addresses. While enjoying the ease with which Janet Fullerton asked those questions and made those remarks, trivial indeed as regarded their mere purport, but necessary at a reception or large party as is a table of contents to a school-book, she thought of God's goodness in making beautiful the desert places and opening one land where all could rise or sink to their level. While hearing every word, and seeing, with a woman's quick eyes, the exact fall of the plain but graceful black silk, the droop of the lace at throat and sleeves, the delicacy of the flowers gleaming in Janet's dark and glossy braids, she at the same time looked into memory's gallery and beheld an ungainly girl, with stubby hair cut short and straight around her neck, a blushing, bashful face, hands twisting in and out of each other, a dress of good quality, but

misfitting, a strange mingling of colors, and, as the center of all this, a recitation marred by grammatical errors and a disagreeable provincial pronunciation. Yet from such a beginning had been eliminated the lady before her.

"I wish I might lay aside my duties as hostess," said Janet, as Bentie turned toward the various members of the faculty, "for a conversation with you. I will say just one word: when you are gone I shall lose one of my strongest inspirations for culture."

"O Janet!" and Bentie flushed at this unexpected compliment. "I feel, when talking to you, that you are in many things away beyond me."

"The blessing of this college is," was the reply, "that we have every incentive to humility, because here we see how much there is to learn."

"Yes," replied Bentie warmly. "Life and years seem so beautiful since they have come to symbolize growth to me. But I am trespassing. If I see you free I will come back."

Janet received her next guest with a glow in her eyes and a tenderness about her mouth that made her very beautiful. Soon the parlors were full. The faculty, feeling that their

relation as teachers to the students had about closed, were as jolly and entertaining a company as is a body of ministers at a dinner table. The Juniors as a class were happier than they had ever been before, as one guest after another admired the beauty of their floral decorations, and they received and returned the numerous repartees on their dawning honors. The collation, of course, was as artistically arranged as were the parlors. How luscious the fruits and ices looked on that warm June evening! and with what sheer enjoyment faculty and students mingled their laughter and wit with coffee and sandwiches, creams and confections!

Franc and Cassie at length found an opportunity to resume their conversation of the afternoon.

"Well, Cassie, what do you think of Bentie Winthrop to-night?"

"Beautiful! But who would ever have thought of producing an effective dress out of comparatively nothing, as she has done."

"I heard the president tell the lady-principal that he thought Miss Winthrop the most exquisitely dressed person in the rooms, and that he did not know but that they would

have to establish a department for the study of dress as a fine art, and place Bentie at the head of it!"

Cassie looked up with eyes as round as beads as she replied: "Who would ever have thought him so observing as to notice a toilet in that way. But what do you suppose? Bentie's organdie is made over! It isn't silk, for I felt of it when I was behind her, and yet it looks as well."

"The coarsest kind of linen. I was in her room while she was dressing. Isn't it an idea?"

Bentie did look well. Out of mere fondness for planning and sewing, she had, after it was fitted, made her own dress and trimmed it after a design of her own. There was a gracefulness about the draping, an exquisiteness in the arrangement of the delicate, white ruffles, shading here and there long sprays of a climbing, faintly tinted buff rose, intermingled with forget-me-nots, that made the dress seem a part of her, and intensified the purity of her complexion and the finer outline of her countenance.

Maria Riverton and her clique were conspicuous in diamonds, expensive laces, and all

the varied articles of a fashionable woman's wardrobe.

"They look after all so much like the fashion-plates that there is nothing novel about their costume," said Franc.

"O, I don't know about that," Cassie replied. "If you put Maria Riverton by herself she is a queen. All these lesser lights, though, trying to ape her style and magnificence, are simply ridiculous. If I did form a part of the retinue of a popular girl, I would take good care to secure myself from ridicule. Just think of Mame Darlington appearing in Maria's finery with all the indifference of a possessor."

"There is just the difference between Bentie's and Maria's friends. Bentie's are all common-sensical and with an individuality of their own, while Maria's are small reflectors of her importance and views. If she were not vain, she could not have stood such sycophancy so long. Now, one of the chief bonds of union in Bentie's circle is the fact that each expresses her honest views and doesn't pretend to anything more than she is."

"Well, what a sober talk we have had in the midst of all this gayety," said Cassie, with

a suppressed yawn. "I wonder, to close the subject, what position we shall take as Seniors a year hence, and whether the Juniors will criticise us at this rate."

"Of course they will. Here comes Mame Darlington, to expatiate on her friend, Maria Riverton, I suppose."

Bentie, during this conversation, was discussing her future with the president of the college. He was a man of liberal views regarding the education of women. Not an extremist in the sense of pushing and grinding weak and strong alike through a college course; yet his influence in personal advice and general talks before the students was to encourage thoroughness, rigid classification, and a college education, if at all compatible with physical strength. As he looked over the parlors, gay and beautiful with a hundred healthy young faces, crowning well-developed and comely bodies, he thanked God in his heart that the trial had been made and success crowned the effort of an education for women commensurate with the lofty possibilities of her nature. He felt honored in being a leader in such a movement.

"And so, Miss Winthrop, you cannot en-

dure the thoughts of going home, after these four years of arduous toil, to a life of ease and no thought for the morrow."

"The toil is what has opened my eyes. Why, doctor, I would not relinquish for any earthly treasure the mental strength and the increased capacity for all kinds of healthful enjoyment I have gained through toil. I know now that it is only through *doing* that I can make any further advance. I feel so thankful to the college, to papa, and to God, for all that has fallen to my lot, that I long to help other women in some way. Papa sent me here with the expectation that when I should have finished I was to come home and be his housekeeper."

"That is as noble a mission as you could have."

"I know it is; and it shall be my first duty. It seems to me, though, that with what I know of the management of a household, I could at the same time follow out some other vocation."

"I had one in mind for you if you had been perfectly free."

Bentie looked up with a "what" in her eyes, and the president continued:

"It is our aim, you are aware, to supply, as soon as possible, our teachers from our graduates. We wanted you as a teacher in the department of sciences. The professor of chemistry and philosophy tells me that you are very superior in your knowledge and recitations."

Bentie clasped her hands in her old, childish way and exclaimed:

"O Dr. Bennett, what a temptation you lay before me! I will not accept, of course; but, since you encourage me so, I will tell you what my greatest present desire is. Do you think it would be right for me to spend two or three days of every week away from home in an assayer's office? I have a position as chemist open to me, and I want to take it."

"What does your father say?"

"He says 'go,' and that he will do all in his power to assist me."

"That settles the question, then, does it not?"

"Not altogether," and Bentie looked doubtful. "I do not know whether I have the right."

"My daughter, there is no true parent but that finds his highest happiness in the prog-

ress of his children, and, I think I may add, his chief blessings from God in the furtherance of their general welfare."

"I could come home every night."

"And your father is never at home through the day."

"No, and I could give my orders every morning before starting, and, by having dinner a half hour later, superintend the table as I should on the days I should be at home."

"Well, Bentie," and the president laid his hand benignly on her waving hair, "it is my conviction that three or four days spent in an assayer's office will save you from unconsciously devoting the same amount of time and strength to what others who need such employment can do for you. The fact is settled that a large proportion of the women in the United States must work. It is an established physiological fact that all women should work in some way. How advisable, then, for educated and cultured women to make whatever they do a science, and to increase individual and national prosperity by opening as many avenues as possible to their sex. Be a chemist, Bentie."

"I shall, I shall!" she enthusiastically ex-

claimed. "I cannot sufficiently thank you, Dr. Bennett, for making my duty clear to me, nor," added she, after a pause, "for all that you have done for my intellectual and spiritual welfare in a thousand nameless ways."

Tears gathered in the genial eyes of the stately old man, as he replied: "Successful scholars, true women, are the richest reward I can ask for my labors."

When she was alone for the night she took her Bible before undressing—her thoughts were so filled with the unspeakable goodness of God—and sat down, a fair, sweet picture in her chaste and youthful dress, to find some verse for a closing thought. The book opened at that comforting chapter, the fourteenth of St. John, and her eyes rested on the words: "If it were not so, I would have told you."

God had opened the way broad and straight for just the course she wished to pursue. If it were not so, he would have hemmed her in by obstacles insurmountable, have given her a father with less lofty aims for his only child, or a success in college less decided. "If it were not so, I would have told you," made Christ so near. It was so pleasant to be led by invisible but sure hands into a line of

action. It was so beautiful to go to sleep under the shadow of a strong fortress—beneath the watchful eyes of almighty Love.

At length the day of days arrived. At length the fifty girls, in a costume conspicuous for its sobriety and plainness, sat in their accustomed places for the last time, heard the farewell prayer from the rostrum, saw one after another of their number stand before them to utter a thought born to her out of her life or circumstances, and felt with heart-tears that the moment was at hand when they should say, “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a [woman] I put away childish things.” And yet, notwithstanding, each fair young face was smiling through the tears. The light clouds were penetrated by a June sun. The winter storms had not yet come. It was still all future, and what possibilities were there that might not lie in their future?

It is a moment of supreme interest to those who watch a young woman look with serious countenance beyond the bloom and loveliness of her youth, to those days when responsibilities will thicken. There is something of the

ideal about her as she turns her eyes, serene with the ignorance of care, to those days when the white hands will hang heavy, the rounded cheeks be lined with weariness, and the young, fresh, strong, aspiring soul go down into the battle of life.

Who on earth can estimate the strength of a soul? Who can tell how much of heart and brain-sinew there is when the exterior seems made only for the calm of rest and prosperity. To girls is it given to look poetry and to speak poetry. How many are there who as women can say: "We had the courage and the will to live poetry?" Those women who have done so know the ache that abides in such courage and will.

Some such thoughts as the above surged through Mr. Winthrop's mind as he watched his only daughter with modest dignity separate herself from her companions and ascend the stage. Of course he knew almost word for word what she was about to say. Bentie looked over the great sea of faces with a half appealing but composed expression. Her eyes met the anxious, earnest gaze of her father, the satisfied, approving glance of Ben, whom many of "the girls" took for her brother—he

seemed to show such an established and confident claim to her attention. Rose, more sedate than two years before, was devotion in every one of her speaking features. Aunt Winifred looked much the same as she always did, happy, at perfect rest. Yet there was a flush in her usually colorless cheeks which this proud day in Bentie's experience called forth.

Mr. Winthrop followed with undivided interest the familiar words of the essay, or rather oration, of his daughter. Her occasional graceful gestures, the absence of manuscript, and the clear, sweet, honest gray eyes, as they wandered over the upturned faces, persuaded as much as did the speaker's thoughts on "Life-problems."

Ben's memory reverted to the wandering childish arguments which Bentie had been wont to use a half dozen years before, and he approved colleges for women with all his heart as he observed the effects of rigid intellectual training in the arrangement and expression of his companion's ideas.

One problem of which she treated was the difficulty to be experienced in pursuing an advanced course of study. She said:

"In life we see the unity and yet loneliness

of progress. A mother and child are one by reason of tenderest love, but, intellectually, the mother for many years must stand comparatively alone if she grow in the same proportion that the child does. She must draw her mental food, not from the child, but from books, wise company, and matured experience. Many mothers, forgetting this, grow all out into a weak kind of love and, before they are aware, their children are far ahead; perhaps forever. God is one with us by reason of tenderest love. But 'his days go on, go on.' No pause with him! Unless we live a mighty struggle, an unceasing travail, how can we hope to reach any kind of a comprehension of him? Unless there is in our lives a constant progress toward the true, the beautiful, the good, the right, God, and, in him, all true growth, cease to be beautiful to us. It is, however, only in active living that we experience the sweet rapture of life. What may not our transports of delight in eternity be, if, in looking back through the long ages of our existence, our *I am* of that glorious hereafter will realize its magnificent capacities in contemplating the contracted limits of the circle in which our *I am* of time revolves."

Mr. Winthrop was all at once surprised to find the tears dropping over his eyelids. It seemed to him as Bentie descended to her seat that he must take her away from her companions and then and there fold her to his heart. She had been an obedient, loving daughter; she was his chief treasure, and he wanted to reiterate it to her at the moment when she realized one of his brightest hopes for her destiny.

As for Bentie, Commencement Day, with its hosts of friends, numerous congratulations, flowers, and good-byes, was like a bewildering dream. She was really not herself until, having made the journey home, and slept and slept, and slept, as school-girls only can, she awoke the following morning in her own dear room.

## VII.

## A STAR IN THE EAST.

WHEN George was again at home and busy, after attending Bentie's graduation, he realized, more keenly than ever, the difference of manner in which he and his two friends had thus far worked out their careers.

He often went for a few moments to Ben's manufactory. As he watched the latter mingle with his men, and saw critical observation and thorough experience visible in all that Ben did, he loved him more and more.

Ben was so manly, so genial, so hopeful. Could he always be so? George would query with himself on his homeward rides to the city. To his honor be it said, he earnestly hoped that Ben's future would be as unclouded as his past. He only wished that some favoring gale of fortune would blow him into a monetary equality with Ben and Bentie; but there were few signs of such a prospect yet.

And here they all were now, grown. Bentie's temper had not been fully tried in society either, and it might be that she would become indifferent to his ambitions, and in short find him a bore in the midst of all the flattery and attention she would receive.

George settled himself down in the corner of his seat, and looked over the spinning landscape rather despondently after such reveries.

I have written you his thoughts. I will tell you in the course of the chapter how rich friends and poor looked on the career of a boy who had started from nothing and had never once flagged in the steady line of duty he had marked out for himself.

He was no longer teaching in any strict sense of the word. Day by day his father had grown stronger mentally and morally, until he not only assumed more and more of the charge of the school, but finally took his son's classes in addition to his own. Mr. Holmes, after a time, also connected himself with the Sunday-school.

One Sabbath evening in the May of the year in which Bentie graduated, while father and son sat listening, in the deep, golden glow of the early evening, to the chimings of the

church-bells, the father said, with a humility that touched George deeply :

" My son, I would like to join the Church again if you do not think it would be hypocrisy. I have come back to my Saviour, that I do know ; " and the deep, rich voice trembled. " I think it would please her."

George could hardly bear this. He had prayed night and day for his father, that the richest gifts of that once strong mind should be restored, and spiritual health be added. Here was the fullness of answer to his prayer. Why had he not prayed with such prevailing for his own welfare ? The father taken in—the son left out ! But it was right, George thought. He knew that the unfortunate blow his parent had aimed in a moment of delirium could be forgiven. He had long ago felt that it had worked out for that parent a result that might perhaps never have been otherwise attained. So strange are God's providences in making even evil redound to his glory.

" Father," and George's voice was full of expostulation, " I feel sure that God is abundantly willing and glad to receive you. I think, too, that the public avowal of your faith, a renewed open consecration of yourself,

is the only atonement you can make mother. But, father, don't ask me about these things. I have no personal experience to guide me in giving advice. I have been almost persuaded, and yet for some reason I cannot wholly sacrifice to the possibilities of a Christian profession."

"George," and Mr. Holmes walked up and down the room, "I cannot imagine a fate like mine for you. But I can imagine even you yielding at some unhappy moment to a powerful temptation, and finding yourself forever ruined in your own estimation, if you have not Christ as a shield and buckler. Do yield." And Mr. Holmes, pausing in his walk, laid his hands impressively on his son's shoulders. His waving hair, whiter than snow, touched as it was with the pure silver gleam of years and heavy sorrow, his deep black eyes shining at this moment with all their native fire, appealed strongly.

"Not yet, not yet, father." And George, pulling himself loose, turned and abruptly left the room. He had not expected his father to make an appeal to him concerning his own welfare, although he himself had spoken so freely. He felt pursued: Bentie praying for him daily; Ben urging him whenever they

met to decide the great question; the little boys and girls of the school propounding queries the answers to which might shape their immortal destinies; last of all, his father's short but urgent entreaty, which seemed to him the voice of his mother's love here speaking from the very grave! Whither should he turn?

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," sounded through the chambers of his soul.

"No! no!" his proud will answered back.

"But one thing thou lackest—leave all, and follow Me."

"I cannot, I cannot." And George sat down at his desk, and glanced with set lips at a line of law books which meant to him his future fortune and fame. "I cannot. My plans might all be changed."

"You shall be rewarded in the world to come with life everlasting."

"Ay, there's the rub.' I want *this* life. I want to conquer *this* world. I want to be rich. I want to be famous."

"For what is man, that thou art mindful of him? . . . As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone."

He put his fingers into his ears in his excitement. He wished for the moment that he had never heard a word from the Bible. He had a dreadful conviction that if he lived through this hour of agony unmoved he should be hardened to ambition. He dared not refuse to listen. But his stubborn will would not relent.

There was a knock at his door. There, like apparitions, stood his father and Bentie and her father.

"George, I have brought these friends to plead with you," said Mr. Holmes. Then, turning to Mr. Winthrop, he said, "It is a solemn moment for us both."

"George," and the tears streamed down Bentie's cheeks, "I want my prayers to be answered now. We have *all* been praying for you. Do make an offering of yourself."

The young man looked at his companions as some lion might appear on seeing itself brought to bay. Then, as he beheld their emotion, his chest heaved, and, breaking into a convulsive sob, he hid his face in his hands.

Like mountain streams that, swelling, rush with mighty force into a broad river-bed, increasing its shallow depths to a swift, strong,

deep, majestic current, so did the deluge of tears that followed George's manifestation of emotion deepen, and yet all at once sanctify those ambitions of his that had been wide-spread, but far from noble in their bearings.

"I will try to surrender all to God," he at length exclaimed, recovering his self-control.

Still the bells resounded. The last call! The worshipers were almost gathered.

"Let us go to church, my son. Perhaps God will send some message to your soul."

The penitent was desperate now. Contrition, desire, shame, were surging in his soul. Anywhere for peace. "Yes, let us go," he said.

They separated at the door to go to their several pews. Bentie thought that the aged doctor fixed his eyes on George as they entered. Well he might. There were traces of emotion on the cheeks still slightly flushed and in the troubled dark eyes. There was a petition in the father's very manner as he bowed his head in silent prayer.

Dr. Halliday had not been an uninterested observer of George's career. His regular attendance and unwavering attention had often attracted the minister's notice. It occurred

to the doctor that he could in his sermon appeal to his youthful friend. Gradually the carefully prepared sermon assumed the form of exhortation. When the words, "Young man, give me thy heart," sounded on his hearing, George started, then sat down. Then, suddenly rising, to the great surprise of the congregation, he broke the momentary stillness, as if in answer to the summons, with, "I want the prayers of God's people to-night."

"Amen," resounded Mr. Winthrop's voice.

Bentie's face involuntarily broke into a happy smile.

With Methodist celerity the evening service was converted into a prayer-meeting, and soldiers of the cross clustered around the young warrior as he offered his weapons to the Lord of hosts.

As George, with a self-abandonment in striking contrast with his manly form and resolute face, bowed before the altar, many eyes were moist and many a heart was deeply moved. While the congregation sang

"Alas ! and did my Saviour bleed ?  
And did my Sovereign die ?  
Would he devote that sacred head  
For such a worm as I?"

George prayed amid mingled feelings of penitence and lingering pride. No help came.

"Have you given up all?" asked Mr. Winthrop.

"Not all. I cannot quite yield the directing of my own destiny."

"Then pray that the Lord will take the stumbling-block away." And George did pray. One moment his heart yielded, and the next all his ambitions swept back in a flood.

"I will yield. The Lord is omnipotent and all-wise. What do I really know about myself or what I chiefly need? Lord, take me and do with me what thou wilt," he at last ejaculated, and then set his whole mind against retreat and further temptation. Like the creeping of a cloudless dawn over the darkness of a summer night, peace began to spread its gentle light upon his soul. While he still knelt, hearing, and yet but dimly knowing what was said, feeling only a gradual transformation, the Sun of Righteousness rose like a king above the mountains of his will and unbelief, and brightened all the valleys of his soul with burning radiance.

He rose, erect as a young cedar, his fine

countenance glowing with a supernatural happiness. As the singing ceased his voice rang out, electrifying all who heard, with, "This is bliss ! I never knew what life was before. This is, in deed and in truth, a new birth ! I feel myself on the border-land of a mysterious but beautiful country. My soul is standing at the very gate of heaven." Then, losing the abruptness of expression naturally arising from a sweeping flood of joy, he broke forth into an exhortation to the young. In the old church, in the sweet resurrection-month of the year, there began a revival that did not cease until many a gnarled old tree of life was covered with a heavenly foliage, and many a young plant had blossomed with beautiful flowers.

Should I follow the stereotyped method in story-books, I would end right here, as having brought the last of my three prominent characters to what I consider the crisis in his life. But I have shown you that Ben could be a Christian, and, at the same time, a successful business man ; that Bentie's simple trust in Jesus was the ballast to her ship of life sailing over many and trying seas. And I must give you a glimpse of George, working

under the influence of a new law ; and finally, before you leave the trio who are somewhere in the wide, wide world, and whom, in your wanderings, you may chance to meet, we will go together to the laboratory and see Ben and Bentie at work with curious mixtures, and George learning the rudiments of a science I will leave you to divine.

Those who are familiar with the Methodist Episcopal Church are fully aware of the economy practiced in all matters relating to spiritual power. Nothing is wasted. We have Bishops and presiding elders, ministers and class-leaders, Sunday-school workers and mission workers, it is true ; but we also have an immense army of local preachers and exhorters who tacitly agree to fit into all the nooks, and thus use up the room and the opportunity that might otherwise be unemployed.

Well, George, after his conversion, showed so unmistakably ability and spiritual power in the weekly meetings, that Dr. Halliday intrusted more and more of their conduct to, his hands at such times when outside aid was necessary. Although the congregation was devoted to its minister, it was, nevertheless, always ready and delighted to hear the elo-

quent and spiritual appeals of the talented young convert. He carried those of his age right along under the tide of his strong personal influence, and those who were far more advanced than he in years, and in a varied Christian experience, were pleased with the absence of all affectation, and the sincere humility he showed in his desires to suppress self and present only Christ. The natural result of all this was that Dr. Halliday had many earnest talks with George about entering the ministry.

"I have thought of it," thoughtfully replied the young man one day, "and I can say that it would be no sacrifice now for me to do so. I have consecrated all that I am and all that I ever may be to God's service, and the chief question with me is, therefore, 'How can I best serve him?' Dr. Halliday, as you well know, my boyhood was saddened and my mother's life blighted by liquor. From a little boy my desire has been to rise to such a position as a statesman as would enable me to wield a mighty influence against the sale of intoxicating drinks. We as a Church are a pioneer Church in our condemnation of liquor as a beverage. Our ministers, both in and out

of the pulpit, condemn its sale and use. As a Methodist I am on the right side of this question as a matter of course. As a statesman, or even an insignificant politician, the mere fact that I was an abstainer would make me conspicuous."

"And defeat all your prospects."

"It looks like it, I confess. But, Dr. Halliday, if right does triumph, if a resolute will and the cultivation of every power I have with reference to my final victory counts for any thing, then some day I shall stand in the Senate Chamber at Washington, and my soul shall ring out in my voice there denunciations against the curse that is impoverishing and undermining the land I love better than myself. Since all of my private study thus far has been bearing on such a career, and my ambition has now a guiding and controlling power in Christ, I feel more than ever that I must make myself felt in politics and advanced reform questions. From this time on I want to seize every moment that I can to grapple with questions of material and State policy. I am going to make a speech to-night, down near the Battery, on the physical ailment arising from the use of liquor."

"How are you to support yourself through all these years in which you are making a name in politics?"

"Why, sir, with my other work, I have been studying law for two years past, and have met my examinations. In another year Judge Rutherford is going to give me regular legal work in his office. He understands and encourages my desires."

Dr. Halliday sat buried in profound thought. If George could succeed, the career he had chosen would, perhaps, be of vast benefit to the country, and at all events would be an honor to Methodism and a help to the Lord's side. Looking up at length, the minister said :

"My boy, you shall have every aid my personal influence can give, and, what is best, doubtless, in God's sight, my earnest prayers. But let me remind you that you have chosen a path whose every step will be thorny with temptation. The Lord lift the light of his countenance upon you!"

"Amen!" said George fervently.

After the above conversation, he had frequent opportunities to speak in this church, and that on various reform questions. Invited

tations to dinner from influential Methodists poured in upon him. Occasionally his name appeared in the prominent newspapers. In a year, primarily through his energy in the long and thorough preparation he had given to the development of his oratorical talent and to research into questions of finance, state, and history, and secondarily, through the influence of a few like Dr. Halliday, he could not but be conscious that he was the center of many hopes, and his future the speculation of many minds. His social position became, of course, firmly established. Indeed, in the Church to which he belonged, penniless as he was, he became in social influence the peer of all. He was obliged to practice rigid economy, for the school just supported the two men and no more. But George had learned to study independence, and was never ashamed to refrain from any indulgence his means would not allow. As Bentie's was the only lady's society he seemed to want, he had no temptations to lavish expenditures for carriages, concert tickets, etc. She understood his circumstances too well to allow of any needless expense for her pleasure, and, besides, she was so often the recipient of such favors from other friends

that what time George spent with her was either at her own house or in some church gathering.

Thus, with the exception of graduating, his early plan for every thing seemed approaching a fulfillment. His despondency, mentioned at the commencement of this chapter, had no further room for life. He had begun his career like a strong man running a race.

Before George's accession of so much outside influence, Bentie had never thought of being other than proud of his acquaintance, and there was no manifestation on the part of the older members of the Winthrop, Rutherford, and Stanton families to discourage the intimacy existing among the younger members and George. On the other hand, the latter, though he was flattered, invited, and successful as few young men are, did not once swerve in his allegiance to his early friends.

It might have been a question oftentimes as to which of the two was Mrs. Stanton's son, as she sat in the library talking over their hopes and fears with Ben and George. Ben cherished the old confidence in his mother's

opinions; he brought all of his speculations to her to test their merit. He went to her for hope when he descended into those abysses of discouragement which all ambitious and enthusiastic young people stumble into. George, on the other hand, declaimed more than one speech before a very critical audience composed of one person, and had pleaded many an imaginary case, of which Mrs. Stanton and he had previously worked up the outline. As she sat alone, after these helps she gave the boys, she sometimes wondered of which she was the prouder. She knew she wished that George also was her son.

As for Ben and George, if that were possible, all jealousy with respect to their several successes was obviated by the total dissimilarity of their pursuits. When Ben was in the city he never failed to go down to "the office" to see George, who sometimes laughingly entreated him to get into a difficulty with somebody. "Why, Ben, there is no counting the arguments I have manufactured and put away for use."

"I suppose they will fit any case," said Ben.

"Yes; I have calculated with mathematical  
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precision the total number of possible quarrels that could take place on this mundane sphere and settled them all to the satisfaction of both parties."

"You will surely be the next chief-justice of the United States."

"If that is so a case might go hard with you if you don't employ the chief-justice before his promotion."

"Threats, eh! What a chief-justice you would make!"

Ben sat in a revolving chair, with his knees making an acute angle, the result of the position of his feet on George's desk, in front of which the latter sat with a pen behind his ear, and paper and formidable books before him.

The office was a pleasant one and possessed the variety of a sunny window, through which the light of a May sun came streaming on the afternoon of the above-mentioned conversation.

The smiles flitted over Ben's face as he sat thinking, and George, after waiting for several minutes for what seemed coming, said, "What are you thinking of, Ben?

"A case for you," and Ben smiled again.

George seized his pen, then pausing, asked for the preliminary fee, which Ben, with due gravity, produced and deposited.

"The points of the case," said George.

"It's a pretty hard case for any body short of a lawyer to handle at all. Suppose, Chief justice, you put it down without my saying a word."

"Even a chief-justice couldn't do that."

"It must be somewhere in that book of all possible quarrels. Look it over and see whether you cannot hit upon it."

"The legal profession is outwitted," replied George, sitting back and laughing.

"Well, here are the outlines. I regularly employed an assayer for a year. At the expiration of a month I asked her to name her own salary, but she positively refused compensation. You are to prove that any one regularly employed and refusing a salary is insane. Got that case worked up?"

"I do not believe it is down," said George. "Are you taking this method to get rid of your assayer?"

"Get rid of her? She has as much business capacity as any one around the works. The point is here. Business is business. If Bentie

wishes to do such work, she must hedge herself in by all the conventionalities and necessities of business. She does not fully understand this, practical as she is, and I want your legal ability to lead her into the light."

"It is a difficult matter to settle one's own differences, let alone meddling with other people's. I will tell you what I will do though, Ben. I will work your dilemma up in a mock trial, and Bentie shall see herself as others see her in this matter. I warrant she will state her terms then."

"Shake hands on that, old fellow, and come out to lunch with me."

George did so.

Curiously enough, while this conversation was going on in the office, Rose, as her friends had learned to call her out of consideration of her dignity, her future professional career, and her height—although the members of her own family did once in a while say "Trot"—Rose sat in the library at home, absorbed in a story out of which must have grown a thought, for the book dropped slowly from her hands. Her mother, who was sewing in the bay-window, looked at her daughter from time to time, and, skilled as she was in divin-

ing Rose's thoughts, prepared herself for a conversation which, after a very long reverie, began quite plaintively on Rose's part with,

"Mamma, has it ever occurred to you that Ben might some day get married?"

"Most Bens do," replied Mrs. Stanton evasively.

Rose's curiosity was at once and ardently excited.

"You haven't heard any thing, have you, mamma?"

"No, I have not heard any thing."

"Do tell what it is, dear mamma."

"Ben has not said a word to me, Rose, on marriage."

"But hasn't he talked round about on the subject—hinted something? Now, I know he has, or you wouldn't look so—"

"How?"

"Why, as if you knew only you wouldn't tell. Now, I think you might. I am his only sister, and yet he never tells me any thing—any of his secrets. I'll warrant Bentie Winthrop knows all he knows and has given her advice. It almost makes me dislike Bentie sometimes."

"I have used my eyes, Rose, and you have the same privilege with yours."

"Well, I have used mine, too. But I don't find any of Ben's books marked, or any little fancy thing about his room that somebody might have given him. And his album hasn't a single girl's picture in it. Tom Harris's has dozens—I was going to say. Ben never talks about any girl but Bentie, and she is always mixed in some way with a solution. And yet"—Rose's blue eyes sharpened, as was their wont when she was, as Ben said, on a scent—"and yet I somehow feel it in my bones that Ben is fond of some girl. Now, mother, tell me who it is."

"Why, Rose," said Mrs. Stanton laughing, "I do not know that he is fond of any one in the sense you mean. Ben is nothing but a boy yet." Mrs. Stanton looked sober for a minute as she thought how short the time seemed since her son was a baby in her lap.

Rose exclaimed, "He is twenty-three!" and the mother found it impossible for a moment to realize the truth.

"Well, there is time enough," Mrs. Stanton replied. "You can't marry when you are

twenty-three if you pursue your studies and become a doctor."

"I am never going to get married. The idea of such a thing!" and Rose looked vexed.

"Perhaps Ben wont."

"O nonsense! All boys either do or want to," was the sententious reply."

"Then all boys must find all girls who either do or want to."

"Please stop teasing, mamma, and tell me who it is."

"Trottie, you know precisely as much as I do about the young ladies your brother visits, and must draw your own conclusions."

"Why, mamma," she cried, almost impatiently, "he only pays the most general attention, so far as I know. Some have said to me that he liked Bentie Winthrop, but I have pshawed at that idea. They are too much alike and know too much of each other and act too much like old people when they are together. It isn't Bentie."

"You can't think of any one else?"

"Nobody but Bentie! Besides," said Rose, "I think Bentie ought to marry George Holmes. George is exceedingly talented. Every body predicts a wonderful future for

him. And how romantic it would be! Think of his history. I wish Bentie would marry him."

"Don't you think she could do better?"

"Why, mamma, I never heard you make such a remark before. If Bentie loves George, and he loves her, the idea of her doing better!"

"But in case she didn't love George, and did love somebody else, do you think she could do better?"

"Y-e-e-s"—but vehemently—"George is good enough, even for Bentie."

The conversation at this juncture was interrupted by the opening of the door and the appearance of Ben himself. Noticing Rose's excited eyes and his mother's amusement, he at once asked a reason, and Rose said:

"I have been trying to find out your secrets. Mother knows, but she wont tell."

"What secrets?" asked Ben, innocently; but making up his mind not to tell Rose anything for not coming first to him.

"I think you are in love with somebody, and I believe mother knows who it is."

Ben shot a quick, surprised look at his mother, and thus confirmed his sister's sur-

mises, who continued: "In fact, I know you are. Now be a good brother, and tell me who it is."

But Ben was non-committal. Finally, to his sister's importunities as to whether he cared a single little bit for any one, he said, as he turned to leave the room:

"I suppose there are a hundred girls in the country with whom I might have fallen in love, provided—"

"O, you provoking creature!" And Trot rushed to bar the door, but not in time to prevent Ben's escape, whom she heard a few moments after—to tease her she knew—singing behind lock and key, "I knew a bonnie lassie."

"There isn't much use in a brother," she exclaimed, as she stood irresolute in the middle of the library.

"Ben, I am sure, rides and walks with you and takes you to concerts as much as any lover could."

"But he isn't a lover!" At which youthful and precocious speech, and especially as she was only fourteen and never going to get married, she was too discomfited to remain in the room or the house. She started for Ben-

tie's to talk it over; but, on reflection, knowing that Ben might do the same thing, she decided to pay a visit to the family physician to tell him of some of her observations on vapor baths, a cat, as usual, having been the victim of her experiments.

## VIII.

## THE LABORATORY.

WHEN Rose reached the doctor's it was to find him absent on a professional visit. After wandering around in the library for a half hour, looking first at one and then at another weighty medical volume, she decided that she would go to see Bentie, after all. The decision was an immense relief to her, for, putting Ben's want of confidence aside, she had never found any one yet who was as accommodating to her views as Bentie was. So descending the steps with a bound, she hastened through the sunny, cheerful streets, and was soon at her destination, endeavoring to find Bentie.

"Bentie is in the kitchen, making a lemon pie," was the answer to her inquiry for the young housekeeper, who was famous for her culinary skill.

"She is, is she!" said Rose, starting headlong toward the kitchen, and beginning to

sing in a loud voice as she reached the foot of the stairs:

“Sing a song o’ sixpence  
A pocket full of rye,  
Four and twenty blackbirds  
A baking in the pie.  
When the pie begins to bake  
The birds begin to sing,  
Isn’t this a fine dish  
To set before the king.”

Bentie had just taken her pie from the oven, where its delicate frosting had browned to a turn, and with the inviting pastry in her hands, went to the door to meet Rose.

“See, Rose! isn’t it beautiful?”

“Good enough to eat, Bentie. ‘The proof of the pudding is in the eating, though.’”

“It is too hot, Rose.”

“O no. Now give me a piece. There will be enough left then.”

Seizing a knife, without further words, Rose cut into the pie, and, taking out a triangle, tasted it, and said: “A fine dish to set before the king.”

“Rose, why did you do so? We are going to have company to dinner.”

“Why, the only objection that you made was that it was too hot. It isn’t too hot for

me. It is just as good as it can be ; " and the pie rapidly disappeared.

" So it is too hot. I was going to tell you about the company if you had given me time."

" I'll go out and buy you another."

" Indeed you will, will you ? " spoke the cook, who was ready at any minute to take up arms for her mistress. " You can't buy such pies for no money. You had better go home and learn perliteness, if you go anywhere."

Rose paused in her eating, and leveling one of her most dignified glances at the cook, turned to Bentie and said : " Order her from the room."

" Hush, Maria. You go to work, and Miss Stanton and I will go up stairs. Come, Rose, it was foolish in me to mind such a little thing."

Rose went with Bentie, saying, however, as they left the kitchen : " You ought to have reproved her more sharply."

" Rosie," and Bentie twined her arm around her friend, " if I had sent Maria from the kitchen, I should have punished her more than she deserved."

"A servant should never speak so to her superior."

"I may have strange ideas, dear, but generally, I think, a mistress or a lady is to blame if a servant treats her uncivilly. Maria saw you had forgotten your breeding, to take possession of my pie as you did, and so felt on a level with you."

"Dear me, Bentie. If you had never had a lemon pie before, you couldn't make more of a fuss. I wont trouble your kitchen very soon again."

"Now, Rose," said Bentie, in great distress, "it isn't the pie. I only mean, dearie, that we shall be better friends all our life-time than we could otherwise, if we are careful in little things to respect each other's rights and feelings. You are so much younger than I am, doctor, that you ought, I am sure, to take a little advice." Bentie gave Rose such a loving kiss that the latter was rebuked.

They had reached the library by this time. It looked like a very cool, sweet room, with the subdued light falling on the delicate carpet and furniture and the rich bindings of the books.

Bentie put Rose into a great Turkish chair,

and sitting down close beside her in its spacious depths, waited until she became quiet. She looked up, at length, heaving a sigh of such cavernous suggestiveness, that Bentie smiled.

"It is a serious matter," said Rose meditatively. "I feel as if I had been born to quarrel with every one—even my brother Ben. I vexed him this afternoon, Bentie."

"How, dear?"

"O, begging him to tell me something of which he has never lisped a word to me. I don't think it is right, Bentie, for brothers to have secrets from their sisters, do you?"

"It isn't wrong, Rose. At all events, secrets are seldom revealed by coaxing. Do you tell Ben every thing?"

"The worst of it is, I don't seem to have any thing to tell. It is just this, Bentie. It seems to me as a matter of course that Ben ought to be in love by this time; but when I put questions point-blank to him, he left the room and went up stairs. Do you know who she is?"

"Ben hasn't lisped a word to me, Rose. You quite surprise me, too. I had not thought of such things entering your brother's head."

"You little goosie, don't they enter yours?" and Rose looked as though Bentie had not her usual amount of common sense.

"I meant, Rose, that I didn't suppose Ben had any particular thoughts on the subject. Of course, everybody thinks of such things."

"Well, it is very queer," and Rose looked baffled. "Haven't you guessed any one, Bentie?"

"Why, no! Ben and I have so many other subjects to talk over, that that one never enters my mind in connection with him."

"What I told mother!" Rose triumphantly exclaimed. "It is all chemistry or some other science with you two."

"O, no, it isn't," interrupted Bentie; "but, so much of the conversation I hear on who is in love, and who isn't, seems so silly to me, that I am glad to leave the subject alone. I think Ben feels in the same way, Rosie."

"Mother seemed to suspect that it was you."

"Why, Rose!" and Bentie blushed so violently that Rose said: "I be-lie-ve it is!"

"Rose, you are too bad. If your brother thought as much of me or any other girl as you seem to think he does, he would have

told me—or her. You surprised me so, Rose—that was all," and Bentie laughed heartily.

"What made you blush?"

"I suppose I always shall if any thing is said or done that I am not expecting. Now see how easily you might have gotten into a quarrel with me—asking questions and seeking information in such a round-about way."

Bentie assumed a very grave expression.

Rose looked at her rather nonplussed and asked: "Can you tell me, Bentie, how I am to live at peace with the whole world? It is a more abstruse subject than anatomy."

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, indeed!"

"In very plain language?"

"In the plainest of plain language."

"Rose, learn to mind your own business and let other people mind theirs. You wont be in much danger of quarrels then, and, what is more, Ben, I am sure, will occasionally confide a secret to you. You couldn't keep one at present if you tried."

"Nobody trusts me with any, to see whether I can."

"We are having such a plain talk, Rose, that I will tell you frankly, that the only two

things that keep me from loving you better than any girl I know, are your meddling and your forgetfulness of other people's feelings and rights."

If Bentie had not prepared her remark with ranking Rose so high among her friends, the latter could not have borne quite such simplicity of speech. But she reverenced Bentie and loved her very much, and it seemed a very desirable thing to be Bentie Winthrop's most esteemed girl friend. She put her arms around the neck of her companion, and remaining silent for a moment, said: "I ought to be able to overcome my faults, and *I will*. But you must trust me and help me."

"Indeed I shall," and Bentie drew Rose closer and closer to her while the conversation drifted into a discussion of how much is meant by the rule of loving one another.

When Bentie was alone and dressing to meet her father's guests, for whom she had taken such pleasure in preparing a dinner, her thoughts naturally reverted to what Rose had suggested. Her reverie, however, was not of a personal character, for Ben and she had been too matter-of-fact friends. It turned rather upon marriage in general. Notwithstanding

all young or old people may say or think or do, the subject recurs for thought as often as a new engagement or marriage is announced among one's friends. There was in Bentie's case no pressing necessity for pondering it, but, nevertheless, she became very much interested and finally said aloud to herself: "What does constitute true marriage?"

For some reason or another she compared her father and Mr. Stanton, Aunt Winifred and Mrs. Stanton, all of whom commanded her reverence. Each one was so good, but then, so very, very different!

Perhaps there were grades; perhaps one's goodness was better than that of another; perhaps beyond them all and yet comprising them all was a superlative goodness which would make these one-sided excellencies appear like paltry nothings. But then! what if, being married, a man and woman should believe this and grow weary of each other? What if, after marriage, they should think they had in some other human being found a higher type of goodness than they beheld in each other? Would they, should they, become unmarried? Like an answer to these questions, the solemn words of the marriage

service recurred to her: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

In the morning she had read in the Bible that there would be neither marriage nor giving in marriage in heaven. Why? It seemed to her that all the stillness around suddenly whispered: "Because God is good and all goodness will there be manifest in God." Perhaps the glorified souls would be like the bright rays of a sun, close beside one another, and yet so separate—all tending in unerringly straight lines to God. Perhaps it was literally true that God was the brother, the sister, the father, the mother, the husband and wife of all humanity; that here on earth he was merely giving us object-lessons in what he is; in our first beginnings teaching us through the earthly father and mother the eternal prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread;" through brothers and sisters a glimpse of the unselfish doctrine, "in honor preferring one another;" through the husband and the wife that mutual looking up, that reverence, that self-abnegating belief in a goodness given to us as especially our own to shield us and lift us up and heal all the little wounds that daily vexations make, to trust in us and call us good

when others and ourselves think us bad. And was the little child set in the household in order that before "the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain," the father and mother should learn to feel toward it a love made up of all the good affections that had ever come to their past lives? Was not parental love something like Christ's love? Would not fathers and mothers, first of all, in entering on the heavenly life, best understand God?

Somehow, after these thoughts, the world seemed like a beautiful temple through whose portals she had entered to better learn the nature of the God for whose glory it was builded.

The door-bell rang, and her ribbons were still to arrange; but she was soon ready, and, going down to the drawing-room, she became absorbed presently in the animated conversation in which she found her father and his friends engaged.

The dinner was vastly unlike the one that resulted from her first culinary attempt. The meats were juicy and tender, and the vegetables were artistically arranged, and yet substantially prepared. The pie, which, owing to

Rose's conduct, had to be brought on in pieces, was the subject of special delight and remarks.

Mr. Winthrop did look proud of the composed little woman who presided so well, and, when some one praised his cook, could not refrain from saying :

" Maria has a very skillful pair of hands, but it is my daughter's head that originates the meals and secures their execution."

" What an old-fashioned daughter!" said a gray-haired gentleman, but with such an intonation that Bentie felt glad to be "old-fashioned."

" Time always brings the d fashions around again," said Mr. Winthrop. " I believe that with the higher mental education of girls will come a return of the substantial knowledge of our grandmothers. It is these fashionable schools with fashionable life and empty brains that have ruined the usefulness of so many daughters. I wish I had a dozen girls to whom to give a college education. As it is, however, I expect my one daughter to exert twelve times the influence she would if she had not been the recipient of so many intellectual advantages."

"Can she use so much book-knowledge now that she has it?" asked some one.

"Use it! She brought it into play in providing this dinner. She uses it in a thousand nameless ways in making my home pleasanter than it could have been without her wise and careful management. But the care of our home is not all of Bentie's work. She spends two days of every week in an assayer's office learning a profession."

"Why, why!" exclaimed one father over his glasses; "I wouldn't trust my daughters away from home in that manner. And what does Miss Winthrop want of a profession?"

"The times are panicky," said another—a young man—who had a half dozen daughters at home doing nothing.

"My property might go, and then Bentie and I can face the world with a smile, for we both know how to work with our hands and brains."

"Do you understand assaying?" asked the dissenter of Bentie.

"O not by any means in all its branches. My employer, however, has lately trusted me with a great many careful analyses. I am a comparative beginner."

"How long have you been studying as saying?"

"For a great many years," said Bentie, with so much earnestness that the company laughed and told her it was surprising that she had retained her youthful appearance so long.

Bentie bore the rallying bravely and modestly, and started for her business the next morning with renewed determination to become a first-class chemist.

The air was redolent of the mystical, spicy odors of spring as the train swept through patches of woods and past meadows green and beautiful with the rich, new life cropping out in the long furrows and upon the borders of creeks and drains. She had ridden just long enough to put her cheeks in a glow and her blood in healthful circulation, when the cars paused at her destination and she descended.

The office looked very much as Ben had planned it a few months before. There were some flourishing plants in the window; a couple of canaries performed a daily serenade. With these exceptions and a cleanliness in contrast with the dingy appearance of most offices in the neighborhood of manufac-

tories, it appeared very much like a place for hard work.

She found upon the table several lumps of coal. Putting her hat and cloak aside, and donning a long, brown, Holland apron, which reached from her neck to her boot-tops, she sat down to her day's work, which she knew lay in the coal.

Ben was a long while in making his appearance, and while waiting for instructions Bentie examined first one lump and then another, deciding at the same time that there was some trouble over the variety used in the manufactory.

Holding and revolving in her fingers a piece of cannel, before she was aware, she was estimating the possibility of having carved from it a watch-case that would outshine the ebony one lying on her bureau. She would have it daintily carved in ferns of small proportions and exquisite varieties. It should be lined with green feathers, cut and separated until they looked like a fern bed, and it would cost—

The door opened on her reveries, and instead of Ben alone, George also entered the room.

Bentie held up her hand, black with her

handling of the softer coals, in glad surprise. George did not hesitate to give one of them a hearty grasp and shake. He had been off on a lecturing tour and had not seen her in a fortnight.

"What am I to do with all these specimens, Ben?"

"We are not satisfied with the coal used under the boilers. It doesn't generate steam fast enough or in sufficient quantity, and besides, we find that the boilers are growing very thin where the heat is greatest. We want first to find a semi-bituminous coal that will burn with sufficient flame to spread the heat over a larger space; and, secondly, such a variety as will yield the least possible amount of ash and volatile matter. The lumps on the table are from various sections of the country, and I want an analysis of them all."

"I should think the expense would depend somewhat upon the distance from which the coal is brought," said George.

"Of course. But we hope to satisfy ourselves with a Pennsylvania variety."

There was a pause of a moment or two, during which George looked thoughtfully at the

coal, and at Bentie, who was again absorbed in the fine texture of the cannel.

" You admire that, Bentie," he said.

" Yes. I want this specimen for a watch-case."

" If Ben will give it to me, or one like it, I will carve one for you. I used to be quite an amateur in such work, and I think I have not lost my skill."

" I will give it to you on condition that you make me one just like Bentie's."

George laughed, and saying that that was a clause in the law-case of which he had not thought of before, promised.

Bentie, puzzled over their meaning, glanced at the two young men, and then, feeling that it was something personal, asked George to explain.

And he answered instead :

" Now I should think, Bentie, here would be just the trouble with you in adopting assaying as a profession. Your mind will, in spite of you, run off on watch-cases and all that sort of thing. Doesn't she waste hours of time over the beautiful?"

" If she *employs* hours of time over the beautiful, she has the faculty of performing all I

ever expected of a novice in the number of hours she spends a day in the office. I believe her coal and other mineral *bric-a-brac* inspire her to work quicker."

"I do not every day have such a fine specimen of cannel to admire, George. Then, too, I do not really study over what strikes my fancy. That comes of its own accord. I planned the watch-case while waiting for orders."

"This partnership business in a manufactory seems rather odd to me. I wonder how it would work if you and Ben were not the friends you are."

"First rate!" exclaimed Ben. "Bentie tests more delicately than a man would; and, as much of our experimenting depends on acute guesses, this is just the work for a woman."

"I am rather inclined nowadays to believe what Ruskin says of a woman's education," continued George, a little doggedly, and somewhat to Bentie's surprise.

"What are his notions? He is a little old-maidish in a great many points, I think," said Ben.

"O," interrupted Bentie, "he is uncomfortable himself and makes others so occasionally,

merely because he sometimes forgets to look at the beautiful as a whole as much as he does at it in detail. I like Ruskin."

"What does he say?" reiterated Ben.

"Something like this: that a woman shall be sufficiently educated to be able to sympathize with her masculine relatives, but not compete with them intellectually. There is no trouble, then, resulting from a difference of opinion."

Bentie glanced at George obliquely under her long lashes, and, catching a suppressed twinkle in his eyes, which Ben had failed to note, and which the gravity of his voice contradicted, she took up the joke and said:

"That is a very important point. Just as women have, of course, found it a sheer impossibility to refrain from word-battles with their fathers and brothers and other masculine relatives, when these have soared above their feminine eminence, so it is impossible for men to take any comfort in their women-associates if the latter rise to a plane equal to or beyond their own."

"Now confess, Ben, hasn't it caused you some real uneasiness, as you have watched Bentie's progress, lest she should in time

have far greater analytical power than you possess?"

"Pshaw!" said Ben emphatically, thinking that George did not enjoy seeing Bentie as an assayer, and that Bentie was too polite to express to George all that she thought. "I never think of her as an assayer, much less as a rival assayer. If the work is good, I am not concerned to know who performed it. Skilled labor is not so cheap that it can be thrown away when found."

"Ben, does Bentie know why I am here?"

"Of course not. I did not know myself until you made your appearance."

"I am going to speak to the millmen this evening, on the natural harmony existing between capital and labor."

"O I wish I could stay to hear you!" and Bentie clasped her hands regretfully.

"You can. Your Uncle Rutherford told me that, if I did not return with the afternoon train, he would understand that Ben had made the necessary arrangements for the lecture, and that he would make up a party of our friends to come to hear me."

"What hall do you think I have engaged?" said Ben to Bentie.

"I am sure I can't surmise."

"The casting-house. Think of the fine ventilation through those open sides! I think we shall construct the platform over the door to the blast-furnace so that, if George doesn't say what he should, we can close his speech summarily."

"Not a man would do your bidding, after hearing me for ten minutes," retorted George.

"Are you going to declaim against my interests?"

"Not a bit of it. Neither am I going to take up arms against the laborer."

"I am sure George will be impartial," said Bentie.

"Can you give me an hour or two this afternoon," George asked, turning toward her, "to listen to my lecture and its analysis?"

"If you are willing to trust to the workings of a woman's mind. But I must go at my coal now."

The two young men presently left the office to wander arm in arm around the works, and Bentie soon became absorbed in her manipulations.

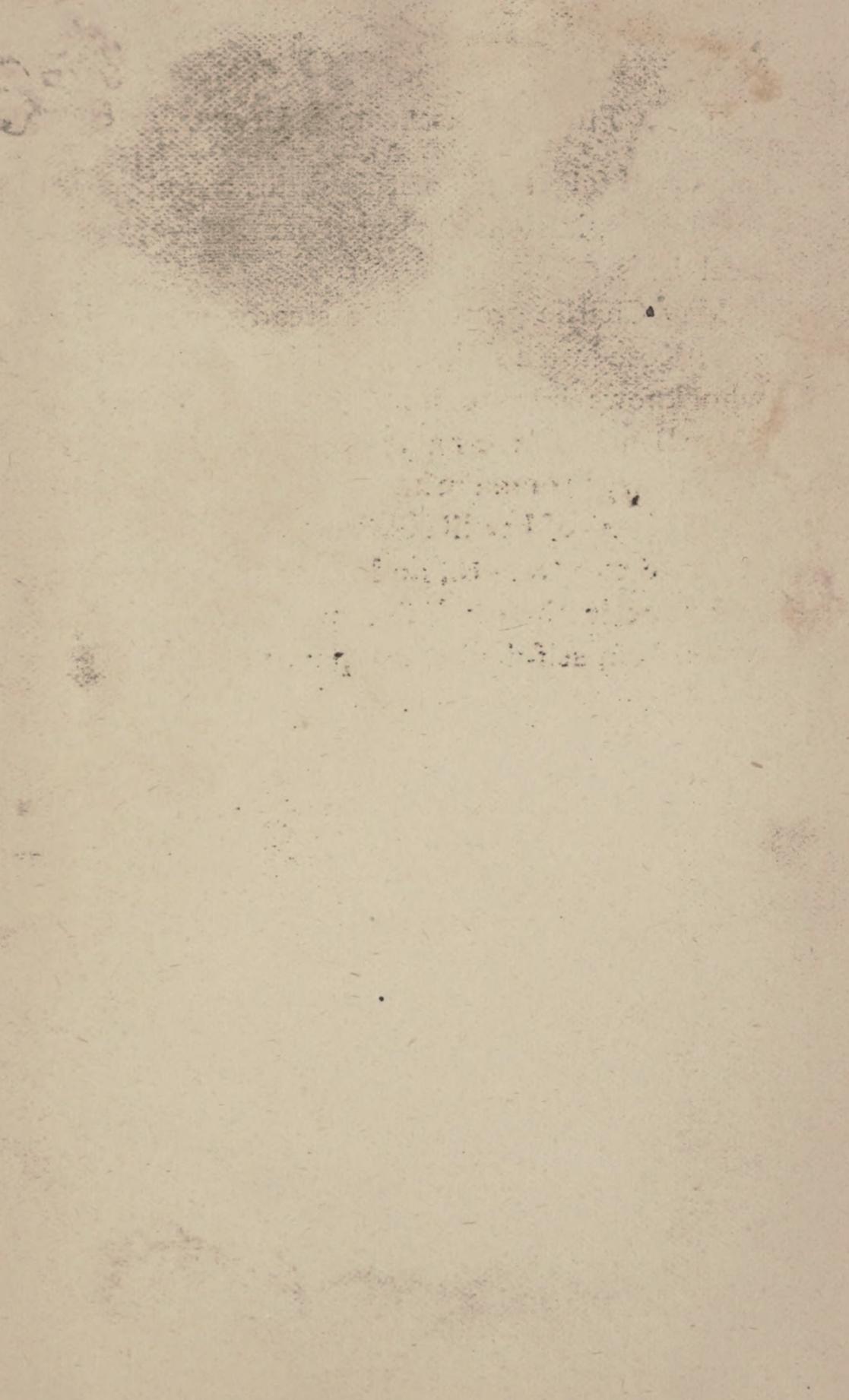
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And here, with a good-bye, we must bid

our youthful friends of this series a god-speed in their aspirations to lead beautiful yet practical lives.

May Charlie grow into a steady, useful citizen; Rose into a skillful physician and a woman who knows how to mind her own business! May Bentie prove an inspiration to all womanly young women who shall read the opening chapters of her life! May Ben go on from strength to strength, and George glory more and more in the discipline and manliness that result from self-denial and perseverance!

THE END.











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